OLD PLACES REVISITED;

OR,

The Antiquarian Enthusiast.

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Thus shall Memory often, in dreams sublime,
Catch a glimpse of the days that are over;
Thus, sighing, look through the waves of Time,
For the long-faded glories they cover.
MOORE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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OR,

The Antiquarian Enthusiast.

PART III.

THE ANTIQUARY AT HOME; OR, GLIMPSES OF THE PAST IN THE PRESENT.

AMPL. Can nothing that
Is *new* affect your mouldy appetite?
The Witts, Act ii. sc. 1.

VOL. II.

"My swelling heart beats high. I look back on the days of the past."

"Sing on, sweet voice, for thou art pleasant, and carriest away my night with joy."



CHAPTER I.

DESCRIPTIVE NOTICE OF THE REMAINS OF ANTIQUITY AND OTHER OBJECTS OF TOPOGRAPHICAL INTEREST IN THE VICINITY OF SIR ERNEST OLDWORTHY'S ABODE. — THE CHARMS OF IMAGINATIVE ASSOCIATION, AND THE EMOTIONS OF SUBLIME DELIGHT EVOKED BY THE CONTEMPLATION OF SCENES AND MONUMENTS CONNECTED WITH ANCIENT TIMES.

Scenes must be beautiful which, daily seen,
Please daily, and whose novelty survives
Long knowledge, and the scrutiny of years.

COWPER.

WE will now glance at a few particulars connected with the interesting features of antiquity, that combine to spread a charm of such winning grace around the storied walls of Repton,—"renowned Repton." "This place," observes the author of the "*Topographer*," "was an ancient colony of the Romans, called *Repandunum*, and was afterwards called *Repandun* by the Saxons, being the head of the Mercian kingdom; several of their kings having palaces here. There was before A. D. 660, a noble monastery of religious men and women, under the government of an Abbess, after the Saxon way, wherein several of the royal line were buried. Here in particular was buried Ethelbald, that good king of the Mercians, who lost

his life by the treachery of his own people, in the year 750. Here also was buried King Meruwall, and the other Mercian kings, as well as Kynechardus, brother of Segebert, King of the West Saxons. It is also famous for the misfortune of Burthred, last King of Mercia; who, having by dint of entreaties and money, held his crown twenty years, was here by the Danes stripped of it, or rather released from the splendid government, and stands as an example how unsettled is every thing that rests on money. The ravages of the Danes, who wintering here, brought destruction on Burthred, laid this place in ruins, in which it probably continued to the Conquest. At the making of Domesday Book, this manor was part of the king's lands, but seems soon after to have belonged to the great Earls Palatine, of Chester. In 1172, Maud (or Matilda,) widow of Ranulph, second Earl of Chester, built here a priory for the Black Canons, whom she had first placed at Calke, to the honour of the Holy Trinity and St. Mary."

To this account we may add, that various remains of the Abbey and Priory still exist; and that Repton has, since 1557, been the seat of an extensively-endowed and eminent free-school, established under the will of Sir John Porte, Knight of the Bath; an institution which once ranked amongst its ushers, the illustrious Hebraist, Dr. John Lightfoot, Master of Catherine Hall, Cambridge, and some time Vice-Chancellor of that University; and William Lilling-

ton Lewis, the well-known translator of the "*Thebaid*," of Statius. Here were educated Shaw, the divine, in the reign of Charles I.; Stebbing Shaw, the historian of Staffordshire; Dr. Jonathan Scott, the translator of the "*Arabian Tales*"; Francis Noel Clarke Mundy, Esq., author of "*Needwood Forest*," and other poems; with many others of just celebrity: amongst whom it would be an act of grave omission not to notice, although still living, our very worthy friend ("*qui nemini est paulum modo humaniori ignotus*,") Dr. Joseph Bosworth, author of an "*Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*," and numerous other important philological works. Here also passed the school-boy days of one who humbly claims no other remembrance of his connection with so venerable a seminary, than the zeal with which he has ever striven to illustrate the memory of the ancient renown of Repton; in evidence of which "labour of love," the following pages, as well as a more formally-descriptive work, entitled, "*A Topographical and Historical Description of Repton, in Derbyshire*," and a Poem, designated, "*Repton; or, Hours of Rural Solitude*," with copious annotations of local reference, present their feeble, yet he trusts, not altogether disallowed testimony.

But, to proceed with Sir Ernest Oldworthy on his tour of contemplation, amid the romantic beauties of that picturesque locality to which our narrative refers; while we expatiate with him on the more interesting sites which have a "name in history, religious and

civil," and which seem to annihilate time as we gaze upon them, and enable us to break down the—

> "Strong barriers round thy dark domain,
> Thou unrelenting Past!"

Often, on a fine autumnal morning, would he linger on the wooded brow of Askew Hill, and feast his unsated eye with the glowing and varied magnificence of the wide valley of the Trent; tracing, with curious delight, the more distant plains diversified with hills and groves, hamlets and villages, gentlemen's seats, churches, and other picturesque objects, for the most part invested with a spell of the past—with that "undefinable but impressive halo which," as Lord Byron remarks, "the lapse of ages throws around a celebrated spot." Long and often, and still with a more loving and joyous perception of its beauties, would he gaze on the bright and gorgeous prospect, stretching away, with all the united charms of linear and aerial perspective, and in all the glorious diversity of lights and shades that constitute the matchless *chiaro oscuro* of Nature's own pencil, to the remote mountainous ridges of the Peak of Derbyshire, that loomed with softly-swelling outline, and with a graceful sublimity of aspect, through the faint blue haze of the landscape's extreme boundary. Beneath lay the silver river,

> "The charm of this enchanted ground,"

winding with slow and delighted course,—its nume-

rous bends and reaches pleasingly appearing, at irregular intervals, between the expansive meadows of emerald verdure, dotted over with the cheerful accessories of their wide-spread flocks and herds.

> "*Herds* with skins of glistening silk, udders for the milk-vase yearning,
> Frequent blending with their hues, white-woolled groups the landscape chequered."

The inexpressible charm of antiquity and local associations clothed every near hill and valley with attributes of peculiar grace and dignity; while the softness and vitality of the air spread a balmy and inspiriting glow through the frame of the contemplative observer.

Here rose the dark and stately woods of Bretby(1), frowning with haughty solemnity, as conscious of the old patrician pomp, of which they were the hereditary emblem; there spread the kindred shades of Foremark (2), rich also in the associations of feudal dignity; while beneath the seeming privilege of their time-honoured protection, expanded far and wide the sunny slopes of ripened and softly-waving corn,—their rich hues of amber light glowing with a placid radiance, and appearing to wear a smile reflected from the gladdening thought of that happiness which the God of Harvests had prepared for the rejoicing homes of men. Well might the enraptured spectator exclaim with the poet:

> "Who can paint
> Like Nature? Can imagination boast,
> Amid its gay creation, hues like hers?

Or can it mix them with that matchless skill,
And lay them on so delicately fine,
And lose them in each other?"

Not far from the foot of the gently-descending eminence stood, in all its serene and simple beauty, the ancient village-church—

"Bosomed high in tufted trees,"

its tall and lightly-tapering spire—

"Fine by degrees and beautifully less,"

forming a widely-observed land-mark, and constituting the chief object around which the less conspicuous features of the home-prospect appeared to group themselves. And most touchingly did its graceful aspect, and elevated associations, harmonize with the tranquil loveliness of the surrounding scene. The extensive remains of the neighbouring Priory (3), grey with the sanctifying influence of preceding centuries, and distinguished by their rich inheritance of ancient trees, next attracted the exploring gaze. The antique weather-stained battlements; and ivied gables, rendered more calmly-solemn by a depth of sylvan shadow, still called forth ideas of monastic seclusion and religious quietude. Voices of history seemed to be chanting the dim glories of the past, and the buried majesty of the ages of old rose up, with a crown of immortality, and breathed its solemn and mighty spell into those decaying walls. Ministering to the tender feeling of contemplative interest thus excited,

would the light and gladsome breeze still and anon pour its tribute of balm and perfume on the inspirited sense; while the free song of the happy birds, pealing, in ever-varied melody, through the bright, blue heavens, added the delicious voice of music to the captivating pleasures of the hour.

At the distance of a few miles, towards the north-west, the ruined castle of Tutbury, towering in all the solemn magnificence of its decayed splendour, caught the ranging eye—as, softened by distance, it rose above the faint outline of the lofty hill on which it stood, its shattered walls and turrets bespeaking the wreck of those days of iron despotism, with which its history was so peculiarly blended; and thus adding a moral serenity to the gentle repose of nature, which breathed around. Peaceful and happy region! gladdening alike the heart and eye of the meditative beholder! Oh, through how many grateful vicissitudes of pensive emotion, have we gazed on your sunny hills and flowery vales, whose soft and pastoral charmfulness seemed to exult in the dignified spirit of the past, as the imagination recalled from time's rich page those themes of "venerable antiquity," as well as those thousand pleasing memories, which the ties of personal incident had connected with their surpassing and ever-youthful beauty!

In the excitement of those thronging fancies that pictured once more the amphitheatres, circuses, and triumphal-arches of old, and the departed pageants

and triumphs of the Roman dwellers on the ancient sites around him, Sir Ernest would exclaim, in the finely-meditative strain of one of our earlier poets:—

> "Look back who list unto the former ages,
> And call to count what is of them become:
> Where be those learned wits and antique sages,
> Which of all wisdom knew the perfect sum?
> Where those great warriors which did overcome
> The world with conquest of their might and main,
> And made one meer of th' earth and of their reign?
>
> High tow'rs, fair temples, goodly theatres,
> Strong walls, rich porches, princely palaces,
> Large streets, brave houses, sacred sepulchres,
> Sure gates, sweet gardens, stately galleries,
> Wrought with fair pillars and rich imageries:
> All these, O pity, now are turn'd to dust,
> And overgrown with black oblivious rust!"

Eagerly, too, did Sir Ernest Oldworthy covet every fragmentary notice of the long-vanished days when that small secluded village, whose few and scattered chimneys now peeped through the leafy repose of intermingling gardens and orchards, and whose gentle meadow-brook, skirted here and there with slender poplars, presented no inapt emblem of its quiet, unpretending simplicity, was the metropolis, or main seat, of a kingdom's strength—when temple and tower arose, with rival majesty, to spread the stamp of magnificence on its streets; while thronging hosts gave back the tide of martial pomp, as the rejoicing sunbeam lingered to behold them. But, alas! the glory of those days had indeed vanished! Like the gaudy

pageants which streamed through her crowded squares and avenues, while the bold, heart-stirring tide of military music expanded on the fitful breeze, the memory of *Hreopandún* (4) and of her triumphs had departed! Her glittering arms and blazing banners were no more! The "eagle" of Rome, the "dragon" of the Saxon, and the "raven" of the north, were alike forgotten, or remembered but as a dream of the night! The very tombs of her princes had perished! Few, indeed, were they who knew more of her past greatness, than that—it had ceased to be!

"Hushed the crowd
That in the busy mart jostled for gain.
The chariot-wheels along the well-worn stones
Move not. Empty the jars of wine and oil.
Broken the grinding-stones; cold are the hearths.
The armourer, the smith, the labourer rests,
The slave and prisoner, from his chains set free.
Fountains and baths are dry. Ended the sports.
The mummer's jest is o'er. The song is hushed;
The minstrel's harp is broke, the wine-cup fall'n." *

The pomp of sword and plume is exchanged for the mean show of rustic implement and apparel. The grand, though quaint, phraseology and lofty notions of heroic times have given place to the unideaed twaddle of our mere vulgar talkers. Instead of the deep, organ-like notes that swell the mysterious echoes

* From a recently-published poem of considerable merit, by Patrick, Lord Robertson, which was lately reviewed in a tone of bantering contempt by one of our leading journals.

caught by the awe-enraptured ear of the enthusiast in antiquity, as they seem to be reverberated by the receding arches that span the long, long vista of the mighty halls of the Past, we perceive, alas! nought save the "petty tinklings of the dulcimer," which best represent the voice of the noteless and small-featured Present. It has been said with painful truth,—

"Ubi seges Troja fuit!"

and with similar feelings must we gaze upon our modern Repton, while we connect, with its humbler sites, the glories of the ancient *Hreopandún.*

> "Yes! gone the mighty and the proud!
> The lovely and the brave!
> Time, Time, before thee all have bow'd,
> Nor 'scaped thy whelming wave!"

Often, in the dewy freshness of a vernal morning, or on a quiet, still afternoon of early summer, when the blossoming hedge-rows, enriched with the transparent foliage of lofty elms and wide-spreading oaks, and the bright green meadows, embroidered with the richly-commingling hues of the clover, the sorrel, the daisy, and the butter-cup, regaled the eye with their luxuriant beauties,—would Sir Ernest Oldworthy wander beside the brilliant and broadly-flowing river, whose calm, majestic tide once bore the bark of the pious Guthlac to his distant seclusion amid the marshy desert of *Croyland*—when, without oar, sail, or rudder, he committed his boat to the direction of that all-

seeing Providence which should guide its uncertain course to some quiet haven, where, amid the tranquil solitude of nature, he might pass the remainder of life in unceasing prayer and divine meditation. And happily was that humble determination formed. That little bark, impelled alone by the genial current, bore him far away from the interruptions and excitements of human fellowship, and conducted him to a secure and joyous sanctuary, where peace and holy inspiration combined their hallowed influences to adorn the radiant passage of his declining years. Often, on these meditative strolls, while pausing to listen to the sweet murmur of the river waves, would Sir Ernest exclaim, in the fulness of impassioned feeling,—

> "How blest! by fairy-haunted stream
> To melt in wild ecstatic dream!
> Die to the pictur'd wish, or hear
> (Breath'd soft on Fancy's trembling ear)
> Such lays, by angel-harps refin'd,
> As half unchain the fluttering mind,
> When on life's edge it eyes the shore,
> And all its pinions stretch to soar!"

The mind of our worthy antiquary dwelt, with unfading enthusiasm, on the fond and inspiring hope of rescuing from the dim obscurity of the past—from the deep shadow of the night of ages—

> "from the roll
> Of names once fam'd, now dubious or forgot,
> And buried midst the wreck of things which were,"

some lost record that might disclose the life and ad-

ventures of the traditional hero of Repton, whose name was so familiarly associated with the eminence which we have already mentioned. Of this reputed warrior, denominated *King Askew*, no historical register had preserved the slightest trace; while tradition only asserted that he died, from the blow of a battle-axe, on the spot which retained the evidence of his name. To this popularly-alleged fact, indicating that a great battle had probably been fought there, the appearance of two extensive barrows, or grave-mounds, on the brow of the hill, gave some token of confirmation. Frequently, in the dusk of evening, so congenial to the solitary musings of the enthusiast, did Sir Ernest Oldworthy issue forth, in dreamy forgetfulness of all surrounding objects that appealed to the present, and,—

"Lose and neglect the creeping hours of time"

amidst those endeared spots, which bore some relation to the scenes and events of far-off years—spots which, in his excited fancy, seemed clothed with a spiritual communion that breathed over his yearning love for the picturesque traits of deceased time, a hallowing and refreshing influence. The faint twilight, investing with a shadowy hue the serene solitude of the fields or woods, seemed to invite the *Genius of the Past* to walk forth, in his misty mantle and in the dim, majestic garb of other years, and claim once again as his own,—

"The ghostly halls of grey renown"

yet remaining to our view, as well as the streams, and rocks, and trees, and ivied towers, that diversified the sweet yet solemn landscape. In such an hour might his pale sister, *Superstition*, be thought to glide, with airy sandals, through the dusky shadows of the remoter forest; or sit, pensively-sad, amid the rude, deserted memorials of some ruined castle or monastery. Invoking the awful and uncontrolled dominion of such soul-appealing influences, would our enthusiast—

> "Tread the long extent of backward time,"

while he lingered beside the eddying deep in the silver Trent, traditionally known as the place where some Norman warrior, popularly named "Fire-blast," *(Fierabras?)** was, in some hot encounter of old, driven, with his forces, into the river; or he would muse away many a deeply-solemn moment beneath the mysteriously-associated sycamore tree that grew above the subterranean vault of the Giant Warrior, near the church-yard of the village; or he would seek the sylvan gloom of the beautiful dell at Foremark, which contained a hermitage called "Anchor Church," of whose origin no indulgent chronicle or oral relation, had bequeathed any account. And as he paced its thought-inspiring recesses—

> "Its echoes, and its empty tread,
> Would sound like voices from the dead."

Fier à bras—Anglicè, "strong of arm."

The imposing solemnity of the dim and rocky chambers would lead back his mind, as with a tie of magic sympathy, to the shadowy scenes of old; and, with all the freshness of early feeling, he would re-create his spirit with,—

"Dreams that the soul of youth engage,
Ere Fancy has been quelled;
Old legends of the monkish page,
Traditions of the saint and sage,
Tales that have the rime of age,
And chronicles of eld.
And loving still these quaint old themes,"*

he would gaze, with introverted eye, into the beautiful realm of Imagination, and solace his privileged vision with the mighty pictures of the past.

Under the illusive agency of this "*Fata Morgana*" of the mind, as derived from a spiritual reflection of the distant images and echoes of the past, would Sir Ernest Oldworthy behold the splendid choir of the old destroyed abbey of *Hreopandún*, with its stately abbess and cowled monks—its relics and images, lights and incense—the tombs of Merewald, Ethelbald, Kineard, Wichtlaf, and other royal chiefs reposing beneath its lofty and consecrated towers. He looked upon shrines and altars surrounded by beautiful nuns, radiant with impassioned holiness—seeming, while yet on earth, to be clad with the majesty and light of angels! Then would breathe on his ear the

* Professor Longfellow.

silvery chimes of the matin or vesper hour; or the sweet strains of the choral psalmody, stealing, in solemn cadence, through the "dim, vaulted aisles" and spacious chapels rich with the memory of long ages, of holy worship; and dying away, in distant echoes, amid the courts and gardens of the sacred edifice. Or, haply, the tone of ethereal beauty that characterized his dreams of the cloister, would become lost in the vivid, rainbow-like splendours of martial pomp, and the swelling peal of the mighty *diapason* be interrupted by,—

> "boisterous untun'd drums,
> With harsh resounding trumpets' dreadful bray,
> And grating shock of wrathful iron arms."

Or, his straying thoughts would range amid the courtly festivities and picturesque array of jousts and tournaments, depicting to themselves the helmets and *barrettes* waving with plumes, and sparkling with jewels, the gorgeous armoury, the exulting banners, and all the splendid shows of the chivalrique pageantry of yore. The merry songs of the minstrels, the cheering cries of the heralds, the rich swell of military music, alternating with the joyous chime of bells, and with the startling blasts of the trumpets and clarions, would delight his musing ear; while, with a like illusion of the visual sense, he beheld, in fancy's proudest colours, the varied resplendence of gold and silken flags and pennons, and the superb draperies of velvet, tissue, and tapestry that

adorned the royal gallery, rich in the fascinations of high-born beauty. He gazed upon the ermined monarch, with his plumed and glittering attendants; and on the stately-looking heralds and pursuivants at arms, eagerly engaged in their preliminary duties. At length the cry of *"A l'ostelle, à l'ostelle!"* uttered by the official band, and accompanied by a flourish of trumpets, summoned the knights to the lists, and, having bowed to the ladies, the gallant champions entered their gay pavilions at either end of the broad arena. Anon, the trumpets and clarions again rent the air, mingled with the shouts of the heraldic body:—"Come forth, knights, come forth!" and the graceful and dignified cavaliers, arrayed in their blazoned *camises* or surcoats, and sheathed from head to foot in their burnished mail, complied with the welcome summons, and, lightly vaulting on their fiery chargers, each richly caparisoned and armed at all points, awaited the third and most important signal. Retired to either end of the roped space, beneath a banner of his own arms, and attended by his serjeants-at-arms and pages, the rival aspirant, with *mezail* or beaver closed and shield adjusted, laid in the rest his rocketted lance, and reined back majestically his pawing steed, till the sign of the "Knight of Honour," communicated to the heralds, called forth the inspiring shout of *"Laissez aller!"* and the barriers or ropes which separated the hostile parties were withdrawn. The dead silence, or the low hum of anxious

curiosity, that bespoke the intense sympathy of the spectators, was now broken or lost in the clang of wind-instruments, the swift roll of reverberating drums, the shouts of the assembled thousands, and the thunder-like crash of the rushing coursers, as, with the fiery speed of the bolt of Jove himself, they bore their gallant riders, in dread, championly career, to the point of encounter. "On, valiant knights, fair eyes behold you!" might still be heard above the glorious tumult. Again and again did the third blast of the silver clarion afford the signal for fresh engagements; and, at every distinguished achievement, the pursuivants sent forth their loudest acclamations,—"*Honneur aux Fils des Braves!—Gloire à la Chevalerie!*" The minstrels echoed them with bursts of warlike melody; and the admiring spectators swelled the joyous chorus with eager shouts. Between each encounter the animating cries of the heralds and pursuivants were renewed, and the hearts of the combatants responded to their thrilling exclamations of "Love of Ladies!"—"Death to Horses!"—"*Vive la Royne de la Beaulté et des Amours!—Loyauté aux Dames!*" At length the lord of the tourney dropped his warder, as a signal for the termination of the mimic war; the heralds shouted, "*Desarmez vous!*" "*Ployez vos banniers!*"—"*La Fine des Tournayes!*" the trumpets "sounded to lodging," and the festival followed, with its crowning accompaniment,—the distribution of the prizes to the successful combat-

ants by the snowy hand of the youthful "Queen of Beauty."

But the dancing plumes and fluttering streamers of the "*passage d'armes*" would in turn become veiled in mystic shadow; while a sudden, lightning-like flash of the sublimer inspiration of the spirit, operating on our Antiquary's more excited faculties, discovered the vast sombrous expanse of the "Hazy Ocean"(5), agitated by the fury of the wintry storm; and as he viewed, with solemn rapture, the fiercely-contending waves, stretching in wildest uproar across the darkened waste, distant mountain-shores would grow upon the eye, ascending in bold and precipitous grandeur along the lurid or pale horizon; soon he gained their dim and cavernous cliffs; thence traversed the bleak and barren, the wide and wild wastes of the barbarian Northman; and anon, a still more enthralling spell than that which proceeded from the hooded cell, or the helmed lists, would assail his captured vision, bringing with it the roar of mighty forests from the desolate regions of the Baltic. Then would his kindling eye grasp the rude hall of the pirate-prince, with its dark and giant inmates—the gusty hearth-fire flinging its broken gleams on the savage and bearded forms of the warriors in their iron-linked shrouds, as they raised on high the twisted mead-cup, ere they drank to the memories of their war-dead. The song of the white-haired (6) scálld (7) would rise to the pinnacled roof, lighting up the restless fires of slum-

bering passion that burned in each rugged breast. He sang of the fight, and of the "deeds of the mighty of old."

"We had the music of swords in the morning
For our sport at Lindis-eyri
With three kingly heroes.
Many fell into the jaws of the wolf;
The hawk plucked the flesh with the wild beasts;
Few ought therefore to rejoice
That they came safe from the battle.
Ira's blood into the sea
Profusely fell; into the clear wave."

Again he spread forth the sounds of battle:—

"The swords bit the shields;
Red with gold resounded
The steel on the clothes of Hillda (8).
They shall see on Aungol's Eyri,
In the ages hereafter,
How we to the appointed play
Of heroes advanced.
Red were on the distant cape
The flying dragons of the river that gave wounds."

Then he held out the consolation of the dying:—

"It delights me continually
That the seats of Baldor's (9) father
I know are strewed for guests.
We shall drink ale immediately
From the large, hollowed skulls.
Youths grieve not at death
In the mansions of dread Fiolnir (10).
I come not with the words of fear
Into the hall of Vithris" (11).

Seized with mad enthusiasm, the heroes would

snatch from the walls their war-boards (12) and weapons, and rush to the near strand, where their barks lay at anchor ever ready for fight. Plunging fearlessly over the storm-floods of the deep, they carried death and desolation to the fair and smiling regions that looked not for their approach.

In such moments of visionary abstraction, or mental *mirage*, would the "spirit eye" of the delighted Antiquary survey the mailed form of the kingly *Askeub*, with the same degree of distinctness that characterized his physical organ, when he gazed upon the near and lofty hill, which bore the name of the historically-unknown hero. The gigantic figure of our learned enthusiast's fancy stood forth, dark and majestically solemn, before his admiring sense; even as that wood-crowned height arose in shadowy contrast with the bright purple of the western sky—soaring above the peaceful vale of the Trent, in aspiring haughtiness. Yielding to the impulse of such suggestions, Sir Ernest would at times half-deem that the gathering gloom, which crept up the eastern side of the acclivity, beckoned his approach; as if to herald him into the subterranean cavities said to exist beneath its summit, in communication with the curious Saxon crypt situate below the distant chancel of the church of Repton, and with the wild hermitage of Anchor Church. Then, quitting the secluded and dimly-featured nook that had inspired his earlier musings, he would seek new communings with the

beings of ancient years on the crested height thus mysteriously associated with the name of the forgotten warrior. Often did the darkening night steal upon his meditations, while the deep-toned clock of the neighbouring valley yielded its warning admonition in vain.

CHAPTER II.

SIR ERNEST OLDWORTHY'S CHRISTMAS DINNER.—SEASONABLE MOOD OF EXHILARATION. — UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL OF MS. AND RARE FOREIGN WORKS, HITHERTO UNKNOWN TO THE ENGLISH COLLECTOR, UNFOLDING THE LONG-WISHED-FOR HISTORY OF KING ASKEW, AND OF REPTON DURING THE ANGLO-SAXON OCTARCHY.

PAN. Sir Proteus, you are *staid for.*
PRO. Go; I come, I come.
Two Gentlemen of Verona, Act ii. sc. 2.

SPEED. Why muse you, sir? 'tis *dinner-time.*
Ibidem, Act ii. sc. 1.

SPEED. And *that packet* hath she delivered, and there an end.
Ibidem.

IT was after a morning's ramble devoted to a similar train of reflection to that which we have briefly sketched out in the preceding chapter, that Sir Ernest Oldworthy, weary with his prolonged explorations, returned to his lonely domicile. It was the "merrye tyme of Chrystmasse"—the festive season that brought back a more vivid recollection of those periods which—

"Opened wide the baron's hall,
To vassal, tenant, serf, and all"—

recalling to the mind's eye the stirring scenes of feudal

merriment, that lighted up the hearts and features of many a wide circle of congenial fellowship:—scenes that drew still more close the ties of amity and social respect; and to the discontinuance of which, we may fairly ascribe much of the decay of old English feeling and sentiment. An attachment to the lords of the soil; the love of neighbourhood; the bonds of service; the community of interest and of enjoyment, gathered additional zest and cordiality from the expanding influence of mirth and good cheer—of blithe welcome and frank courtesy, which went hand in hand at such periods of general and wide-spread hospitality. Yes, it has never been "merrie" England, since the return of this fine old festival was unobserved by the popular rites that once distinguished it, and since dull, formal, reserved, matter-of-fact colloquiality was substituted for the hale conviviality and gleeful sports—the wholesome, unsophisticated fun, and frolicsome jollity, that made the very walls reel with the resounding tide of boisterous delight. Give us back, O ruthless Time! the pleasures of feast and wassail in the Christmas days of old, when—

"The grim boar's-head frown'd on high,
Crested with bays and rosemary,
While round the merry wassail bowl,
Garnish'd with ribbons, blithe did troul;
Then the huge sirloin reek'd: hard by
Plum-porridge stood, and Christmas-pie,"

and the rude old walls of each fortress-like home, dight with their ancient accumulation of warlike and

sporting trophies, and garnished with rich store of holly, ivy, and misletoe, flung back, with a rapturous echo, the shrill blasts of the trumpet, and the startling clang of the cymbals; the mingling notes of the sackbut and the shalm; the roll of the far-resounding kettle-drums; and the full, sweetly-blended strain of the honoured minstrels.

Such a scene was now rising into distinct vision in the glowing mind of our ancient friend, Sir Ernest; his mental eye revelled amid the striking array of corselets, lances, pikes, halberds, brown bills, batterdastors, and fierce-looking helmets, with their widely-gaping vizors, that spread an air of appropriate grandeur around the ancestral hall. The thrice-repeated cry of the heralds — "Largesse, largesse, largesse!" rang in his delighted ear. He beheld each stately-looking guest seated with the lord on his dais, and the mingled assemblage of ranks that took their station at the tables beneath. The meat was served up by watch-words. The white-headed seneschal with his wand of office marshalled in the boar's-head on a silver platter borne in state by a taberdar in red coat and gown of sandal, and accompanied by the choristers of the castle singing in full chorus the good old stave of immemorial usage, that was wont to solemnize its introduction to the board. Oh, for the mummery and the "loaf-stealing," and other Christmas sports, that followed the ample repast! Oh, for a deep draught of the spiced ale, or the strong

brandy-punch garnished with a toast and nutmeg! Oh, for a seat around the blazing *yule*-log that sent its ruddy and roaring flame up the broad, overhanging chimney. And oh, more than all, for the quaint old narratives of ghosts and witches — the spirited sketches of fight and foray, of tilt and tournay; and for the joyous ballads of love and mirthfulness, and the jests, and the waggeries, the ringing laughs, and the hearty expressions of glee, that told how happiness for once reigned triumphant over the darkening influences of care and spleen. Gramercy to the healthful *bonhomie* of the feast-days of our wiser ancestors! But enough: when we revert to old times and customs, our imagination hurries us away from themes of less congenial import, and compels us too frequently to resort to the reader's pardon for a digression in which his feelings may have been sensible of less temptation than our own. To return to Sir Ernest Oldworthy.

Long had the mid-day meal, though appointed for a later hour than usual, awaited his deferred arrival; but, as the worthy Antiquary owed no allegiance to conjugal authority, an irregularity of this nature was of inferior moment, and he at length sat down, in his spacious *fauteuil*, within his luxuriously-appointed *salon-à-manger*, in perfect quiet—at peace with himself and with all the world—and finding no fault with the delicately-stewed lampreys (the product of his native Avon), the boar's head (a present from his

ancient and especial friend, Dr. Thomas Gibson, Provost of Queen's College, Oxford) (13), the rich venison-pasty, or the plump partridges (tokens of the friendly *voisinage* of Bretby Hall, the seat of the Earl of Chesterfield, the celebrated author of "*Principles of Politeness*"), that successively sent forth their grateful odours as a provocative; and which were seemingly not a whit the worse for their temporary delay of service. A few glasses of white port and *Vino Tinto* (14) (wines which he probably preferred for their old-fashioned character) drove away the sensations of fatigue which, with the gloominess of the weather, had momentarily affected his spirits; and he enjoyed, with additional zest, the inviting and diversified viands before him. Much of the poetic sensibility that had characterized his previous contemplations, became lost in the more vivacious influence of his material perceptions; and, as faithful chroniclers, we find it necessary to record that our venerable acquaintance ate and drank, and drank and ate, much in the same natural, unreserved manner as the most prosaic and uninspired amongst ourselves might have done. Whether the *maîtresse de cuisine* had been particularly fortunate in the composition of the prepared liquor accompanying the stew, in the admixture of the currant-jelly with its due ingredients of spice and claret, or in the no less important additions of the bread-sauce and gravy, history sayeth not; but she doth register, and with all accustomed

solemnity proclaim, the memorable and edifying fact, that, notwithstanding the ethereal nature of those elements of thought in which our excellent friend prided himself to exist, he did, on this singular occasion, give free scope to the physical impulses that counselled a genial indulgence. Gay ideas floated, sylph-like, on the roseate clouds of memory. Many a rich passage descriptive of festive enjoyment, from the ever-glorious pen of old Chaucer, crowded, with pleasing effect, on his luxurious fancy. The words of the quaint and witty D'Avenant toyed with his delighted ear, as he more than once repeated aloud the following curious passage—

YOUNG PALL. Nothing could please your haughty pallat but
The Muskatelli, and Frontiniak Grape!
Your Turin and your Tuscan Veale, with Red
Legg'd Partridge of the Genoa hils!
ENGIN. With your broad Liver o' th' Venecian Gosse,
Fatned by a Jew; and your aged Carpe,
Bred i' th' Geneva Lake!

* * * * * *

ENGIN. And then you talk'd, sir, of your Snailes ta'en from
The dewy Marble Quarries of Carrara,
And sows'd in Luca Oyle; with Creame of Zwitzerland,
And Genoa paste.
YOUNG PALL. Your Angelots (15) of Brie!
Your Mirsolini, and Parmesan of Lodi!
Your Malamucka Mellons, and Cicilian Dates!
And then to close your proud voluptuous maw,
Marmalad made by th' cleanely Nunnes of Lisbone!

Sir Ernest, under the excitement of all these corporeal appeals, proceeded to establish the full relief of his awakened appetite, at the temporaneous expense of all that intellectual transcendency—that Alpine sublimity of imagination, in which he had well nigh mused away his connexion with all things sensuous. Again and again did the sparkling wine impart its rickly-qualifying flavour, in aid of the varied condiments that solicited a prolongation of the feast. One delicacy, or well-selected "sequence of novity,' gave place to another, nor appealed to the unsated palate in vain; till, at length, this steadily-combined devotion to the confederate divinities that preside over the festive board, evolved its usual point of consummation—the no longer renewed activity of the gastronomic organs; and, the cloth being withdrawn, the happy *enjoué*, having performed his lavation with rose-water, and transferred the decanters to a bracket-tray adjoining the high and "craftilie-entayled chymeney-peece," threw himself into a deeply-imbedded *chaise-longue* of the most luxurious construction, and basked in the cheering warmth and lustre of a well-arranged wood-fire.

Many a quaint passage from our old writers delighted his teeming mind; and at times he gave utterance to one that best amused his fancy. Such was the following:—

"Ye shall have Romney and Malmesine,
Both Hypocras and Vernage wine;

Montresse, and wine of Greek,
Both Algarde, and De-spice eke.
Antioch and Bastard,
Pyment also, and Garnard;
Wine of Greek, and Muscadell,
Both Claré, Pyment, and Rochelle."

It was an evening of dark and chilly December. The rain, mingled with hail, rushed stormily against the ancient casements of the little parlour, and the eddying blast careered, at intervals, down the spacious chimney; awakening a revived impression of comfort, by its contrast with the genial tranquillity of the brightly-illuminated and closely-curtained apartment. Ever and anon would the fire give out a stronger blaze as the rushing blast sounded more drearily without; and at such moments the long series of richly-blazoned escutcheons in the deep gilt cornice that surrounded the chamber, and the fine old pictures by Holbein, Vandyck, Lely, Kneller, and others that hung beneath, would become more distinctly revealed to the admiring eye. The rich antique cabinets that filled the recesses on either side of the superb Gothic chimney-piece, loomed pleasingly through the lessening shadow. The plaister mouldings of elegant flowing scroll-work, intermixed with fruit and flowers, that covered the ceiling, stood out in richer relief, and soothed the sight with their softly-flickering outlines. The portraits of the Oldworthys and the Greystocks, for many generations, seemed to look down from the curiously-painted and shining wainscot, in gratified

approval of their descendant's unwonted festivity; and as this thought occurred to the latter, he re-filled his smiling glass of ancient Bohemian facture with the generous old white port that did honour to their hereditary cellars, and with the *Vino Tinto*, which had been imported in 1696, by his worthy progenitor, whilst secretary of legation at the court of Madrid. As the delicate *nare* of either wine approached his well-instructed organ, he wandered in imagination, through the perfumed vineyards that had given it birth—

"To happy Convents, bosom'd deep in vines,
Where slumber Abbots, purple as their wines,"

continuing to gratify his nostril with its richly-endowed scent; and occasionally raising the picturesque-looking glass with its long wormed stalk and bell-fashioned boll to a level with the lamps, to scrutinize its clear and sparkling lustre. While he performed this graceful act of connoisseurship, his memory reverted to a speech of *Florello* in the "*Just Italian*," and which, with his accustomed habit of soliloquy, he repeated aloud—

"These are the victories of wit: by wit
We must atchieve our hopes; which to refine
And purifie, with paces doubled let's
Descend a marble vault, there taste the rich
Legitimate blood of the mighty Grape.
'Tis precious as the milke of Queenes; such as
Would teach dull Saturne laugh. It magnifies
The heart, and makes the agill spirits dance,
It drownds all thoughts adulterate and sad,
Inspires the Prophet, makes the Poet glad."

It is strange, indeed, to witness the change of aspect which scenes, characters, and incidents undergo, when surveyed, or considered, under the influence of opposite moods of feeling. The object which, at one moment, we gaze upon with feverish delight, or the aim that excites our most enthusiastic energy, is often, by the magic of some revulsion of thought, banished with unqualified disgust; or, at least, regarded with the listless sentiment of indifference. The *rationale* of this mental coloration was amusingly confirmed by the Antiquary's present experience. Every sight and sound reminded him of repose and pleasure. The antique Dutch clock, on the sideboard, appeared to present a brighter disk, and to mark the progress of time with a more cheerful articulation; while the wealthy array of old family plate, consisting of vases, chalices, stoups, bowls, *tazzas*, cabinet cups, tankards, *épergnes* and salvers, and boasting of a time-honoured display of heraldic embellishment, seemed to reflect the broad blaze of the ancient lamps (for Sir Ernest Oldworthy, like Ethelred II. (16), or Heliogabalus, of still earlier memory, despised candles), with unwonted vivacity. His favourite brindled cat, rejoicing in the chaste and gravity-beseeming name of Tabitha, and which, with that listlessness remarkable in domestic animals on the approach of rain, or during disturbed weather, had, for the greater part of the day, coiled herself, in voluptuous repose, on the tapestried rug, shook off her drowsiness, and

appeared to share in the lightsome mood of each surrounding object. It might, indeed, seem that this interval of unusual hilarity was brought about by some mysterious pre-ordination, as introductory to the splendidly-gratifying incident about to follow. For, scarcely had the Antiquary chanted, in a sort of *sótto vóçè*, the few strophes of the good old Christmas song, beginning:—

"The Boare's head in hand bear I,
Bedeck'd with bays and rose-mary,
And I pray you, masters, be merry
Quotquot estis in convivio.

CHORUS.

Caput Apri defero,
Reddens laudes Domino,"

when the door was gently opened, and his adopted niece, Miss Margaret Greystock, a fair and delicate girl of some eighteen summers; who, in compliance with the moody and solitary habits of her relative, rarely participated in his hours of repast,—glided into the room. Exhibiting a large packet with sundry broad black seals, she proceeded to inform him, that soon after his departure in the morning, a stranger, attended by a page in rich antique-looking livery, and whose card, as well as speech and address, indicated that he was a foreigner, had placed it in her custody, desiring her to convey it to Sir Ernest Oldworthy, with an intimation that he proposed to himself the honour of paying his respects at the earliest opportunity.

"And now, my dear uncle," added she, with a smile of engaging *naïveté*, "forgive me that I deferred its delivery till you had dined; since I feared that its contents would prove of so exciting a nature as to deprive you of that attention to refreshment which your long fatiguing walk, and studious meditations, imperatively required. In short, the gentleman—a young military-looking man, extremely handsome, with black moustachios—apprized me that it contained three volumes which would be found of considerable use in defining the history of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Mercia—an object of research which his father understood, from a mutual correspondent, Dr. Stukeley, had long particularly engaged your attention."

"Hah! by the shade of the mighty Alfred, girl, I would have asked no worthier refreshment after a forty-days' fast! I may say, with my merry acquaintance, *Menenius Agrippa*—'It gives me an estate of seven years' health; in which time I will make a lip at the physician: the most sovereign prescription in Galen is but empiricutick; and, to this preservative, of no better report than a horse-drench.' Yea, I would rather possess these volumes 'thanne alle the gold in the reyne'—yea, than—

'Whate'er the ocean pales, or sky inclips.'

What are 'all the chests in Corioli, and the gold that is in them,' to these inestimable gems! Thou didst

ill, child, very ill, to withhold so important a deposit one moment from my possession. But I will not chide thee; thy intentions were good, and thy tidings are better—two points that may well bespeak a parental indulgence of thine error."

So saying, the Antiquary delightedly caught the small white hand which had been deputed to present so enchanting a gift, and bestowed on it, in confirmation of his pardon, and as a testimony of its own inviting loveliness, a gentle and laudatory kiss.

"How slender and how fair a thing is woman's soft white hand!"

"By the lion of Saint Mark, wench, an thou servest me another such trick in future, thy dainty little neif shall, in lieu of this oscular benediction, expand itself to the crepitating salute of my longest folio-stile. So be warned in time. *Caveat manicula delicata.* Let thy soft little hand take care. Beware the '*ferulæ tristes, sceptra pædagogorum*,' of my ancient friend, Martial!—And now rest thee merrie, mine own daughter, thou shalt anon incline an ear of delight to the Wonders of the World that Was! We will gaze back, my sweet Madge, on the days when our beloved Repton was the mother-city of a royal realm; when from her vertical point of greatness she looked down with metropolitan dignity on her humble and ancillary towns of Lincoln, Nottingham, Warwick, Leicester, Coventry, Lichfield, Northampton, Worcester, Gloucester, Derby, Chester, Shrewsbury, Stafford, Ox-

ford, and Bristol. Then, *mea virguncula bellula*, was the now boastful London a mere trading-place in the petty kingdom of Essex—of Essex the satellite of Mercia! 'Ods lifelings!"—(this was an interjection of rare occurrence in our lofty-thoughted friend's speech, and indicative of some highly-exhilarated mood,)—"I shall now reap the long-hoped-for 'harvest of my joy!' Hark—hark! Methought I heard the old bells of St. Wystán ring out a jubilant peal, as if they sought to blend their long-divorced echoes with the reviving minstrelsie of the past! I may say, with the old bard I love—'Is the voice of past times in my hall? Sing on, sweet voice, for thou art pleasant, and carriest away my night with joy.' And again:—'My swelling bosom beats high. I look back on the days of the past.' Now, perchance, *meum corculum, meum melliculum*, my pretty little honey, my dear, my sweet-heart, we may gaze on the 'fire-clad eye sublime,' and on the warlike terror and pomp of the mysterious and unknown Askew—on that ideal prop of many a shadowy vision—my 'man of men'—my 'model-warrior'—the '*flos heroum*'—the "*mirabilis Mars* of Northern Chivalry'—the 'earthly Jove!' May the gods be propitious—marry, 'amen, and amen!'—And now, *mea pretiosissima Margarita*—my little pearl o' price—my super-dainty sweeting, my dearest, my collop,—let us hearken to the voice of ages—the warrior-ages of the North; let us hear it oracularly discourse of the 'deeds of days of other

years.' Come, my heart, my diamond, we will read of—

'The noble blood of Gothic name,
Heroes emblazoned high to fame,
In long array;
How, in the onward course of time,
The landmarks of that race sublime
Were swept away!'

"'Why, where art thou, Chitsface? What, thou wantest to steal off? 'Marry whip thee, gosling: I think I shall have something to do with you. Come, you are a young foolish sapling, and must be bowed as I would have you.'"

But the gentle Margaret, for whose ear the rugged events of early times bore no engaging spell, and who failed to see, in the pages of Saint Bede, the Venerable, or his brethren of the monastic quill, those charms which to spectacles-assisted eye were so apparent, called to mind, ingeniously enough, some urgent occupation of lady-like demand requiring her close attention, and tripped daintily forth, with a hurried and smiling farewell, leaving our venerable friend in the quiet and full enjoyment of his newly-acquired treasure.

We are tempted at the present point of our narrative, to recall to the reader's recollection a very singular and striking illustration of the power of the "ruling passion," called forth on a similar occasion to that which now drew forth such exquisite feelings of devotion from the breast of our excellent and

amiable friend, Sir Ernest Oldworthy. The following prayer by Thomas Hearne, the celebrated antiquary, is taken from *Letters from the Bodleian*, vol. i. p. 180.

"O most gracious and worshipful Lord God, wonderful in thy providence, I return all possible thanks to thee for the care thou hast always taken of me. I continually meet with signal instances of this thy providence, and one act yesterday, when I unexpectedly met *with three old MSS.*; for which, in a particular manner, I return my thanks, beseeching thee to continue the same protection to me a poor helpless sinner, and that for Jesus Christ his sake."

CHAPTER III.

"FAIRY FAVOURS." — THE CONTENTS OF THE IMPORTANT PACKET DESCRIBED.—REMARKS ON BIBLIOMANIA.

"After much sagacious and persevering inquiry, and occasional but partial disappointments, he at last chanced in a happy hour on *the great object of all his labours.* * * * A glance was sufficient; it was with difficulty that he could suppress the feeling of exultation which shivered and fled over his whole frame. * * * The PRIZE was now won, and a collection perhaps unrivalled in Europe, an El Dorado of imaginary wealth and glory, was safely lodged in the precincts of his own apartment."—*The Stuart Papers.* (New Monthly Magazine.)

WITH an eager and trembling hand did Sir Ernest Oldworthy proceed to unfold the important evidences that should bear record of his beloved *Hreopandún* in her high and palmy days of regal distinction. His eye glanced, with unspeakable delight, on the circumstantial and imposing aspect of the strange packet, the large black seals of which were impressed with the armorial bearings of a grand-prior of the order of the Temple, as appeared from the *grande croix*, and the banners in saltier, *en arriere*, and from the *croix pattée*, gules, borne in a chief, argent, in addition to

the sixteen quarterings, or "*gentilitia indicia*," of the owner; as well as from the conventual badge and collar of the order forming an exterior appendage to the shield, and which were again repeated in connection with the *heaume tarré de front* with its towering plumes, that dignified still further this wide show of gentilitial and chivalric privileges. On the accompanying card, within a *bordure* of antique scroll-work, was inscribed—"*Le Chevalier François d'Argentre;*" to which was hastily added with a pencil—"*Un ami de Docteur Stukeley.*" Unclosing the numerously-folded cover of the impressive packet, he found three very antique-looking volumes, of which we shall endeavour to give some account. They were, indeed, from their intrinsic value, entitled to be classed amongst the "*longè rarissima*" of any collection; yea, even among the most boasted *κειμήλια* recorded in Dr. Dibdin's erudite publications. One of these curious literary treasures was in old wooden binding, and furnished with a pair of brazen clasps elaborately engraved, but of rude construction. It was inwardly adorned with a profusion of *bizarre* wood-cuts, and its title ran as follows:—"Memoriæ Septentrionales: sive, Historia et Chronologia de Rebus Succiæ, Daniæ, et Norvegiæ, e Scriptoribus Hist. antiquissimis erutæ et digestæ." The colophon was partly torn away, but "Romæ: in Ædibus Lynceanis," was still preserved. This work was printed in Roman type, on vellum, in a small folio size; and its date was pro-

bably somewhere about the middle of the sixteenth century. The second volume was arrayed in white monastic binding, richly stamped on the sides. This was a large black-letter folio on vellum, and bore the following title:—"Britannia Saxonica: seu, Variorum Heptarchiæ Regnorum Annales, vetustate antiquissimo aliquot abhinc seculis conscripti, atque nunc demum, magno amantium antiquitatis omnium commodo, e tenebris in lucem vocati, Radulpho Shildrido, milite aurato Angliæ. Lutetiæ Parisiorum: ex officinâ Viduæ Bernardi Hyacinthi Sancti-Martini, 1569." But the most remarkable of these "fairy favours," (as they might well seem,) was that which we are about to describe. The very sight of its venerable exterior drew forth a tear of exquisite pleasure from the revelling eye of the bibliomaniacal Oldworthy. A coating of purple velvet, relieved with embroidery in filigree on the sides, and decorated with richly-embossed and massive silver clasps, was curiously protected by a transparent cover consisting of two plates of horn, edged with ivory, and united at the back by a pair of silver hinges designed in the form of *dragons*, whose wings extended over the sides of the case, which they served to strengthen, and were rivetted at the points to the ivory edge alluded to. The cover which we have thus described was secured to the volume by two *laminæ* of the same material, that formed a coat to the inner side of the binding, and were affixed by means of a groove in the edge of

the outer plates; being additionally supplied with four small silver hooks and staples, to prevent their disengagement from the slide.' The first object that caught the Antiquary's attention within, was a magnificently-emblazoned shield of arms, containing thirty-two quarterings, surmounted by an escutcheon of pretence having sixteen more. Beneath was inscribed—"*E Bibliothecâ Hildetandi Comitis de Mellentio.*" Sir Ernest's minute acquaintance with the Norman annals and genealogical archives, readily assured him that the relic on which he gazed had formerly belonged to the famous castle of Pont Audemer, in Normandy; while amongst the various quarters of that stately shield, with its proud motto or device, displayed on two pendants—"*Avi numerantur avorum,*" he at once recognised the ancient and illustrious coats of *Barduedor*, *Amoucrduile*, *Valenges*, *Sourdemale*, *Monchenesy*, *Lorancourt*, *Fleschampe*, and others. "Haraldi Upsaliensis Annales Rerum Gestarum Ascæ, Lethræ Regis," was marked, in faded ink, and in the "bastard," or "mongrel," letter used in France in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, on what in modern phraseology would be termed the *fly-leaf* of the volume, for the purpose of indicating the title of the work, which being in MS. and of the early date of the ninth century, was unprovided with the more modern accommodation of a title-page.

To say that the impassioned Oldworthy gazed on this announcement of the realization of his hopes—

the discovery of a narrative which should unfold the long-coveted history of *King Askew*—with the exceeding joy of one who had discovered some mighty hoard of golden treasure, would convey no adequate idea of the soul-uplifting transport—the wild, tumultuous sensations of Paradisiacal delight, that glided through every thrilling vein, and revelled in his dilated and beaming eye. To use the words of a late writer, "he gazed in silence and astonishment; it was a moment of true and unalloyed delight—an instant which, in the estimate of the enthusiast, will outbalance the sufferings of months and years, like the "land! land!' of Columbus, or the Εὕρηκα! of Pythagoras." His exultation might have brought to mind the triumph of Cicero, when he at length discovered the sepulchre of Archimedes, which had been lost by his ungrateful countrymen, and of which he had eagerly undertaken the search. Oh, it is not for the little mercenary spirits of the world—the dull, matter-of-fact, pence-hugging speculators of ordinary life—the *Strobiluses* of our old friend Plautus—to form an estimate of the rapture of an elevated mind, when it expands itself, in its enthusiastic vigour, to embrace some glorious prize of intellectual discovery (17), and for the while abandons to its own dreary shadow and coldness the whole heart-sickening circle of common-life associations! It seemed to our Antiquary's excited fancy, as he gazed with passionate attention, and with the most eager curiosity, devouring line

after line, and page after page, of these precious evidences of distant and long-forgotten events, that he was listening to the oral relation of one of the sagamen (18) of old, whose soul had long migrated to

> "That undiscovered country, from whose bourne
> No traveller returns" (19).

His hand trembled like a leaf, as he hurriedly turned over each dusky, time-tinted page; his fine eyes kindled with growing enthusiasm; a smile of indescribable sweetness illumed his glowing cheek; and his attitude bespoke the pride, happiness, and delight that spread themselves over his excited frame. He occasionally, in the irrestrainable exuberance of his joy, broke out into fragmentary exclamations, abundantly expressive of the rapture of his heart, such as —"Hah! by the cherub of St. Matthew!"— "Quaff the wave, rosy fountains are streaming!"— And thus he proceeded with convulsive eagerness, to decipher the faded characters. How did he gloat on the quaint, familiar melody of the *Norse*, or "Old Danish" language in which the manuscript was set forth,—sometimes pausing in his rapid perusal, and seeming to spell, with a lingering love, every page, and line, and word. And oh, that swell of heart—that soaring elevation of spirit, with which kindred worth recalls the triumphant glories of long-vanished greatness! How, in our own times, does the fame of Denmark swell in the hearts of her sons, as they

read the soul-stirring lines of her noblest poet—the illustrious Oehlenschlager—

"Stolt blomstred' Danmarks Land fra Arilds Tid,
Til Syden löd dets dierve Krigerhæder;
Dets Kæmper reiste sig til mandig Strid,
Naar Kongen böd til Valhals raske Glæder;
Og dobbelt elskovsfuld sin Arm, saa hvid,
Om stærken Beilers blodbestænkte Klæder
Den hulde Jomfrue slyngte södt og smilte,
Naar hiem i Elskovs Favn han atter ilte."

We will now endeavour to give some account of the contents of those important records which challenged Sir Ernest's most anxious attention. For this purpose we avail ourselves of sundry translations, not strictly verbal, but partly literal and partly paraphrastic, which he appears to have made from the more striking passages, and which are respectively in the Latin, modern Danish, and English languages. As the three several volumes treat occasionally of the same events, we shall select such passages from each as will best enable us to lay before the reader a clear, connected view of that portion of the legendary and historical matter which more immediately associates itself with the life of Askew, and the occupation of Repton by the Danes. Our opening extract from this "tale of the times of old," will describe the fabled circumstances attending the birth of the Northern hero; and which we may more conveniently assign to a separate chapter.*

* Let it be borne in mind by the reader, that, to enhance the

seeming authenticity and interest of the following sketches of ancient Northern manners, and of Repton in the Olden Time, I have availed myself of the legitimate and often-used privilege of representing them as derived from documents of ancient date, supposed to exist under the several titles prefixed to the ensuing chapters. I mention this fact under the more distinct form of a detached or additional note, in order to acquit myself of any presumed desire to introduce them as the records of genuine history or popular fable. The antiquarian reader, who would separate the facts which they contain from the imaginary incidents connected therewith, in respect to the elucidation of the more local vestiges of the past, may consult, if he pleases, my "Topographical and Historical Description of Repton," to be published in the present year. He will, however, find, in the Notes which accompany the ensuing chapters, much historical information of a varied character, calculated to shew, with sufficient distinctness, the main outlines of the story, so far as they accord with authentic evidence.

NOTES TO PART III.

(1.) Bretby Park, the chief hereditary seat of the Earls of Chesterfield.

(2.) Foremark Hall, the principal residence of the elder of the two equestrian families of Burdett.

(3.) Repton Priory, a mansion belonging, at the time referred to in the text, to the Thacker family, from whom it passed, with the Priory estate, to the Burdetts, the present proprietors. It has been tenanted, in late years, by the succeeding head-masters of Repton school.

(4.) The Anglo-Saxon name of Repton.

(5.) The early appellation of the German Ocean.

(6.) This epithet is of frequent occurrence in the sagas, and Procopius and other ancient historians have informed us that the hair of the Goths was straight, and white as silver.

(7.) The *Scállds*, or *Skálds*, were a sort of travelling minstrels, who composed and recited the praises of kings and heroes in verse, and continually migrated from one northern country to another. They were the chroniclers, and often the companions, of kings, attended them in their conflicts, and thus, from their presence at the scenes they had to record, they were able to give a lively and faithful description. In the Icelandic language, a

list is kept of the 230 chief Skálds, or poetical historians, from Ragnar Lodbrog to Valdemar II., amongst whom are several crowned heads and celebrated warriors.—WHEATON'S *History of Northmen*, p. 51. Mr. Conybeare, in a paraphrase from the Anglo-Saxon, has the following elegant passage, in allusion to this interesting class of adventurers:—

"Thus, north and south, where'er they roam,
The sons of song still find a home,
Speak unreproved their wants, and raise
Their grateful lay of thanks and praise.
For still the chief who seeks to grace
By fairest fame his pride of place,
Withholds not from the sacred bard
His well-earned praise and high reward.
But free of hand and large of soul,
Where'er extends his wide control,
Unnumbered gifts his princely love proclaim,
Unnumbered voices raise to Heav'n his princely name."

(8.) Hillda or Hildur, Bellona. The Goddess of War of the Northern nations.

(9.) Baldor, the second son of Odin, was the most beautiful and amiable of the *Aser* or gods. Unlike the rest of his brethren, he was fond of peace, and had the power of allaying tempests, and acting as a mediator, to avert divine wrath. His decrees were irrevocable. In some points he resembled the Apollo of the Greeks.

"His war-cry peace, good-will: love was his two-edged sword:
Crest of his silver helm, sat dove-like innocence;
Grace marked his life, his word: his death-sigh breathed 'forgive.'
In light 'neath distant palms, far pilgrims seek his tomb.
'Tis said his tidings walk, peace-shod, from dale to dale,
Melting the flinty-heart, cementing man to man,
Building, of living stones, a temple to this god."

(10.) One of the many appellations of Odin, the chief god of the Scandinavians.

(11.) Another name of Odin. He is said to have enjoyed nearly 200 designations descriptive of his various qualities or attributes.

(12.) Shields. Sometimes boats were thus denominated.

(13.) A singular custom prevails at this college, namely, the service of a boar's head on Christmas day, which has been thus described by old Anthony à Wood:—"When the first course is served up in the refectory on Christmas day, in the said college, the Manciple brings a Boar's Head from the kitchen up to the high table, accompanied with one of the taberdars, who lays his hand on the charger. The taberdar sings the following song, and when they come to the chorus all the members that are in the refectory join together and sing it."

A Caroll bringing in the bore's head:

"*Caput apri defero*
Reddens laudes Domino.
The bore's head in hande bring I
With garlans gay and rosemary
I pray you all synge merely
Qui estis in convivio.

"The boare's head as I understand
Is the bravest dish in all the land
Being thus bedeck'd with a gay garland;
Let us *servire cantico.*

CHORUS.

Caput apri defero, &c.

Our Steward hath provided this
In honour of the King of Bliss,
Which on this day to be served is
In Reginensi atrio.

CHORUS.

Caput apri defero, &c."

(14.) A sweet red wine called tent, or *tinto*, because it is a white wine coloured. It is a very rich and excellent wine, made from the juice of a particular kind of grape, which is not used till some time after it has become perfectly ripe. Alicant (in Valencia) and Malaga are the places which produce it. It is chiefly imported from Cadiz, and there called *vino tinto.*

(15.) A kind of small cheese commonly made in France.

(16.) This monarch could never bear to look on a waxen candle, in consequence of having been beaten, while an infant, by his mother Elfrida with such a substitute for the rod, or other ordinary instrument of correction. The circumstance is thus alluded to by Turner:—"His amiable disposition gave the tears of affection to his brother's memory; and Elfrida could not pardon a sensibility which looked like accusation, and might terminate in rebellion to her will, and the disappointment of her ambition. She seized a waxen candle that was near, and beat the terrified infant with a dreadful severity, which left him nearly expiring. The anguish of the blows never quitted his remembrance. It is affirmed that during the remainder of his life he could not endure the presence of a light."

(17.) The first edition of *Geoffrey of Monmouth* was published by the care and expense of L. Cavellat, whose introductory address, as Dr. Dibdin observes, is most diverting. He says that, "happening to be rummaging among some old books in a college library at Paris, he stumbled upon a certain work called *the History of the British Kings*, covered with the glorious dirt and mouldering of antiquity." The sight and the perusal affected him almost to madness; [" Dii boni! quanto animi affectu iterum atque iterum legi et perlegi!" are his words;] and he began to find that "what he had hitherto deemed fables, was true history." Geoffrey is not, however, entitled to the credit of being an authentic chronicler.

(18.) A Saga-man recalled the memory of past events in prose

narrations, as the Skalds did in verse. The memory of past transactions was thus transmitted from age to age by the poets, or Skalds, and the Saga-men, or story-tellers, till the introduction of writing gave them a fixed and durable record.—Pref. to BOSWORTH'S *A.-S. Dictionary*, p. 146.

(19.) Perhaps the chief interest that attaches to the incursions of the Northmen, and to the stormy feuds of the rival kingdoms of the Octarchy, is associated with the deep shadows which Time has flung over each remote event,—too often, as it would seem, for the purpose of concealing from the shuddering gaze of posterity scenes and characters marked with the direst features of crime and depravity—of crime that revelled in acts of bloodshed from the inherent motive of reckless cruelty; and of depravity that stimulated the appetite of lust, of rapine, or of tyranny, by the very desolation and despair which its indulgence entailed on the hapless objects of injury. "Both the secular and ecclesiastical story of the Saxons," observes Echard, "are vastly defective. The former consists chiefly of wars and battles, by which we discern great barbarity, violence, and rapine; but for what cause they were undertaken, by what council they were directed and carried on, or what reason or equity there was for them, we can hardly so much as guess. Nor are the battles themselves more artfully nor fully described than the combats of wolves and bears, or the skirmishes of ravenous birds in the air. There were frequent attempts among the petty kings upon each other's dominions, and as frequent rebellions of the great men against them; and many times he whom riches, popularity, or faction advanced, took upon him the title and state of a king. The church story is in a great measure a confused collection of legends, visions, tales, and vulgar reports, which passed for current in those rude and credulous times. Yet, out of these clouds of darkness, out of these monkish and inconsistent discourses, we may pick out many things surprising, and matter sufficient for strange admiration, if we take notice of the frequent fastings, the fervent prayers, the large and almost profuse alms of those times; what stately and magnificent fabrics, churches, palaces, and monasteries were built and founded

in those days; what plain and unlearned zeal, what obedient, quiet, and hearty devotion then possessed the minds of the people, when in about 200 years time thirty Saxon kings and queens resigned their crowns, with all the glories of the world, and entered into a religious solitude!" The same writer also remarks:—"This heptarchy is indeed a field wherein so little gain is to be reaped, and where the small produce is so mixed and choked with so many monastic tares and brambles, that the account of the monarchs who severally reigned in the seven kingdoms, seems rather to be the heads of an historical dictionary, than the parts of a continued narrative; and may, perhaps, tend rather to perplex than gratify our curiosity."

"Even the great learning and vigorous imagination of Milton," says Hume, "sank under the weight; and this author scruples not to declare, that the skirmishes of kites or crows as much merited a particular narrative as the confused transactions and battles of the Saxon heptarchy."—HUME'S *Hist.* i. 30.

There was much fallacy in this remark of our great bard which has been ably refuted by Sir Francis Palgrave, and I have cited the passage only for the gratification of introducing the commentary of this ingenious and learned writer. "Our Milton," he observes, "who, great as he was as a poet, had no peculiar talent for historical enquiries, expresses his opinion that such conflicts are as unworthy of notice 'as the fights between the kites and the crows.' Burke, the celebrated orator, who, like Milton, failed as an historian, has repeated the same comparison; and it has been borrowed by many other writers of great eminence. With submission, however, they are in the wrong. A simile which may eke out a verse or embellish and relieve a speech, may, nevertheless, be a very invalid argument; these distinguished writers were entirely deluded by the picture presented to their fancy. And the popularity which the comparison has attained—for it is in every body's mouth—has tended, in no small degree, to encourage an erroneous mode of investigating the truths of history. Whether the kites or the crows gain the battle may certainly be of little consequence to us, as an abstract question; but if we are employed in investigating the natural history of these birds, then it becomes

very important to know how, and when, and for what reasons, they carry on their hostilities. Their pugnacity is a fact that elucidates their habits, and which must not be neglected by the enquirer. For, assuming that kites and crows do wage war amongst each other, according to Milton's supposition, the inference to be drawn is, that the nature of the genera to which kites and crows belong, differs most essentially from the genus of rooks, who are quietly directed in their course, without ever engaging against an enemy. He who wishes to understand history, must learn to estimate the importance of facts and details, especially those relating to remote or obscure periods, not by their apparent value, but in proportion to the insight which they afford into the general character of society."

While, however, I express the fullest approbation of Sir Francis's sentiments, in reference to the above argument, I must yet be permitted by the worthy knight to indulge in a remark or two on the apparent indistinctness of his views relating to natural history—a liberty which I feel assured he will freely concede, as it proceeds from an ingenuous desire to illustrate the force of his own maxim,—that "he who wishes to understand history, must learn to estimate the importance of facts and details." His observation respecting rooks, namely, that they "are quietly directed in their course, without ever engaging against an enemy," evinces, I conceive, a very erroneous impression as to the character and habits of those birds. I have more than once seen hawks and rooks in close hostile engagement! a fact which convinces me that rooks do not "differ most essentially" in regard to their "pugnacity," from the genera of kites and crows, and which seems to confirm Milton's "supposition" that kites and crows "*do* make war upon each other;" since the habits of the kite (now a very scarce bird) vary little from those of the hawk, whose conflicts with rooks are sufficiently known to those who much frequent the more secluded parts of the country. For an interesting anecdote relating to the fights between a heronry and a rookery, in a gentleman's park in Westmoreland (communicated by Mr. Hutchinson, author of the "History of Cumberland"), I may refer to any of the later abridgments of "Goldsmith's Natural History," where, also, may

be found ample evidence that a more litigious, quarrelsome, and vindictive bird than the rook does not exist. "If a foreigner," remarks Goldsmith, "should venture to intrude into the society, the whole grove would at once rise in arms against him, and expel him without mercy." The domestic broils of a rookery during the season wherein the birds build their nests, are endless; scarcely a day passes without exhibiting a renewal of depredation and annoyance mutually practised against each other, and which usually terminates in the most hostile engagements. Every proprietor of a rookery—nay, every school-boy in a rural parish situated in the vicinity of one of those sable colonies, is already convinced of the truth of these remarks on a bare statement of the proposition. I have elsewhere, in the course of these notes, taken the liberty of pointing out other matters wherein I am so unfortunate as to differ in opinion from this very talented and justly popular writer, whose works have contributed, in a pleasing form, much valuable knowledge in various branches of our national history. The besetting fault of some of our present learned authors, whose pages I have also presumed to criticise, appears to be a contemptuous disregard of the more ordinary method of viewing a subject, and a desire to startle and extort admiration by the velty, ingenuity, and seeming depth of their ideas, That they are often acute in their discrimination of the truth, and possess an equal adroitness in the arrangement of their arguments, while their knowledge of history is most extensive, and their mode of illustrating a subject at once striking and original, I will not deny; and whenever there is any real difficulty to contend with —any obscure points to be elicited in an abstruse question—they are usually very successful reasoners; but it too often happens that they let their desire of shining in the exercise of a learned ingenuity get the better of their prudence; and on such occasions they are necessarily betrayed into an exposure of the futility of their speculations. As one instance of it, I may advert to page 36 of Sir F. Palgrave's "History of the Anglo-Saxons" (Family Library edition), where, rejecting the clear impressions of a common-place view of the subject-matter, he speciously remarks that "even the names of Hengist and Horsa seem only to be epithets

derived from their standard, the *Snow White Steed*, which still appears as the ensign of Kent in England, as it anciently did in the shield of the 'Old Saxons' in Germany." Now, let it be remembered that the Saxon names had usually a particular meaning; as Beornwulf, "bear wolf," Ceolwulf, "ship (keel) wolf," Hundberht, "illustrious hound," &c., &c., &c.; and what therefore would be more likely than that, in the event of any leader adopting a *personal* device for his standard, he would choose that which corresponded with the name he bore; more particularly when such name was usually selected, in those warlike times, as expressive of some quality most valued in the heroic character. Thus, Hengst or Hengist signifies a "stallion;" Horsa or Hross does not require any explanation. The *Horse* is an image emblematical of strength, beauty, and fleetness; and, as such, was often applied as an appellation, according to the almost general usage of adopting such names as bore a reference to the more essential attributes of the warrior. Indeed, if we look back to a far remoter period of antiquity, we shall find that the figure of a horse was used as the symbol of war, in regard that—

"*Bello* armantur *equi*, bellum hæc armenta minantur."

A classical reader need not be reminded that the Horse was adopted by the Romans as the device of one of their war standards. What critic, therefore, taking common sense for his guide, would assume that the leaders possessing such names derived them from their standards, in the event of its being shewn, as in the instance before us, that the latter represented the object which corresponded with the meaning of their own appellation? Would it not rather appear that the standards bore an allusion to the names, just as in our own day we see persons bearing charges in their coats of arms having reference to their family surnames? It appears to me that the *Snow-white Steed* was chosen by Hengist and Horsa as an emblem allusive to their names; and this supposition leads me to question another statement of Sir Francis. That the *Snow-white Steed* is still borne as the ensign of Kent in England is most apparent, and that it was adopted from its correspondency with the device of Hengist and Horsa is pretty

obvious; but that it constituted the bearing which *anciently* appeared in the shield of the "Old Saxons" I am disposed to doubt, on no less an authority than that of the illustrious Wittichind, Duke of Saxony, who, writing in the time of Charlemagne, avouches the fact that the early arms of that people contained the associated figures of an *Eagle*, a *Lion*, and a *Dragon*,—perhaps originally the united devices of three confederate tribes, and of which I think it probable that the last was the emblem borne by the Angles, and by a portion of the Saxon invaders of England, and which formed the banner of Mercia and of Wessex during the Octarchy. Besides, had the standard of the "Old Saxons" *anciently* consisted of the device in question, such a fact would have no reference to Sir Francis's view of the matter. Hengist and Horsa were not Saxons, but Jutes; and the standard of Jutland was a *Swan of the Ocean;* so they could have nothing to do with the *Snow-white Steed* as a national emblem; a fact, however, which could not be inferred by the reader from the passage which I have thus presumed to comment upon, with every feeling of respect for the learned and talented author, to whom I am personally indebted for a recent communication which afforded a valuable clew to inquiry on a subject of literary research.

Since writing the above remarks, I am indebted to my highly-esteemed correspondent, George Rogers Harrison, Esq., F.S.A., Blue Mantle Pursuivant of the Heralds' College, London, for the following statement of the origin of the *White Horse* as a bearing in the armorial shield of Saxony; from which it plainly appears that such device was not borne as the ensign of the Saxons till the time of Charlemagne; at least three centuries after the piratical invasion of England by the Jutish *ealdormen*, Hengist and Horsa; and that there was no connection, therefore, between the *Snow-white Steed* which formed their armorial distinction, and that which was adopted by the Saxons, and which now appears as a bearing in the shield of Hanover. From this account it also seems that Wittekend deserted the ancient national emblem of Saxony, which he himself describes as containing the associated figures of an *Eagle*, a *Lion*, and a *Dragon*, and adopted a *Black Horse* as his device; in like manner, as Hengist and Horsa,

neglecting the early Jutish ensign of the *Swan of the Ocean*, had, three hundred years before, set up a *White Horse* for their standard, which is still preserved as the armorial ensign of Kent:

"The White Horse on a red field was the armorial bearing of ancient Saxony or Westphalia, and has for many centuries been borne by the illustrious House of Brunswick. Historians state that Henry the Proud, Duke of Bavaria (father of Henry the Lion, Duke of Bavaria and Saxony), married, in 1126, Gertrude, daughter and heiress of the Emperor Lothair II., by his consort the Empress Richenza, who was the daughter and heir of the last Count of Nordheim, and, in right of her mother, heiress of Eckbert II., Margrave of Saxony and Thuringia, and Prince of Brunswick; and that in consequence of this marriage with the lineal descendant of Wittekend, the last Saxon king, Henry the Proud assumed the armorial bearing of that sovereign. The banner of Wittekend bore a *Black* horse, which on his conversion to Christianity by Charlemagne was altered to *White*, as the emblem of the pure faith he had embraced." Mr. Rogers Harrison adds to the above account other interesting particulars connected with the bearing of the same device; but they are of more modern reference, and do not apply to the purpose of the present inquiry which is that of shewing that the *Snow-white Steed* was not *anciently* borne in the shield of the "Old Saxons." I may perhaps with propriety add that I gave an intimation of my purpose of pointing out these facts to the learned author of the history in question, in a letter of which the following is a copy:—

Repton, near Burton-on-Trent,
Feb. 26, 1847.

Sir,

May I allow myself the liberty of communicating a few remarks which suggest themselves on a perusal of that passage in your interesting work, "The History of England: Anglo-Saxon Period" (Family Library), which refers to the *Snow-white Steed*, as borne in the banner of Hengist and Horsa, and to your opinion that those leaders adopted their own appellations from a connection with the above device. I should not have troubled

you with these observations, but for the circumstance of my having written a work wherein I find occasion to treat of the period of history under notice, and to refer to your suggestion as to the origin of the names in question, and as to the early armorial bearing of the "Old Saxons." I trust, therefore, you will consider this statement an adequate apology for the intrusion I commit.

You remark, that "even the names of *Hengist* and *Horsa* seem only to be epithets derived from their standard, the snow-white steed, which still appears as the ensign of Kent in England, as it anciently did in the shield of the 'Old Saxons' in Germany." With reference to this opinion, I would respectfully and with much deference observe, that there was usually a particular meaning connected with the etymology of the names borne by the Teutonic race, as instances of which I may cite the Saxon appellations of Beornwulf, Ceolwulf, Hundberht, &c., &c., and it appears to me likely, therefore, that if a warrior adopted any particular emblem of a personal nature, he would select that which bore a near allusion to his own name. In our own day we see people receiving a grant of arms containing *charges* adopted on the same principle.

You observe, that "the *Snow-white Steed* anciently appeared in the shield of the 'Old Saxons' in Germany." The ancient arms of continental Saxony are described by Wittekind as containing the associated figures of an *Eagle*, a *Lion*, and a *Dragon*; he himself, as Duke and afterwards King of Saxony, bore for his device a *Black Horse*, which he afterwards exchanged for a *White* one, on his conversion to Christianity by Charlemagne, and as an emblem of the pure faith he had embraced. This adoption of a *White Horse* as the Saxon ensign took place above three hundred years *after* the piratical invasion of Hengist and Horsa under a similar standard; so that there appears to be no connection whatever between the *Snow-white Steed*, their emblem, and the *White Horse* of the descendants of the "Old Saxons."

And indeed I may observe also that Hengist and Horsa were Jutes, not Saxons, and the national emblem of Jutland is recorded to have been a *Swan of the Ocean*; so that their adoption of the

device in question appears to have had a personal rather than a national origin. Its correspondency with the present ensign of Kent is obvious enough; but it has no connection whatever, I conceive, with the *White Steed* borne in the shield of the princes of Ancient Saxony, and still appearing in that of Brunswick-Hanover.

I beg to add my apology for troubling you for a line, at your entire convenience, affording me the benefit of your advice on these points of inquiry. And I have the honour to be, with much respect,

Your most obedient servant,

ROBERT BIGSBY, LL.D.

Sir Francis Palgrave, K.H., F.R.S., F.S.A.,
Record Office, the Tower, London.

To this communication I received no reply! The reader will, perhaps, judge that I had no reason to feel mortified at the circumstance. My arguments, it appeared, were *unanswerable*. Sir Francis, perhaps, considered it the best course to say nothing, where nothing could be said to turn them aside.

I shall close this lengthened note with a quotation from Sir Francis Palgrave's "History of the Anglo-Saxons," which forcibly illustrates, while it confirms the conviction that I have long entertained respecting the principal cause of the hitherto slight degree of popularity which Anglo-Saxon history has enjoyed amongst us:—"Amongst the many causes which have contributed to render our Anglo-Saxon history unpopular, is the extreme difficulty of forming any definite idea of the obscure and shadowy personages who figure in its pages. But by associating their names with familiar localities, we obtain a better acquaintance with them. I am sure that Sir Walter Scott's verses, describing 'King Ida's castle huge and square,' have done more for that same King Ida than Nennius and Malmesbury, and all the chroniclers put together. And I have brought 'Tamworth town' forward as much as I could, in order that the recollection of 'Tamworth tower' may aid to impress my readers with the remembrance of Offa, the Mercian king."

PART IV.

KING ASKEW; OR, THE "DRAGON OF THE SHIELD:" A LEGENDARY NARRATIVE DESCRIPTIVE OF THE HEROIC AGE OF THE NORTH.

CHAPTER IV.

HARALLD OF UPSAL'S "ANNALS OF THE EXPLOITS OF ASKEW, KING OF LETHRA."—EXTRACTS: THE FESTIVITIES IN HONOUR OF THE INTENDED UNION OF SYRITHA, DAUGHTER OF THORIR, KING OF LETHRA, INTERRUPTED BY THE SUDDEN DISAPPEARANCE OF THE BRIDE. — FLIGHT AND MYSTERIOUS ADVENTURE OF SYRITHA. — BIRTH OF KING ASKEW.—UNION OF SYRITHA AND VEIGUR.

FLO. The day
Of celebration of that nuptial, which
We two have sworn.
Winter's Tale, Act iv. sc. 3.

In the caverns of the west,
By Odin's fierce embrace comprest,
A wondrous boy shall Rinda bear.
GRAY.

Mightiest of a mighty line.
Idem.

A dragon's fiery form belied the god:
Sublime on radiant spheres he rode,
When he to fair Olympia press'd,
And stamp'd an image of himself!
DRYDEN.

BRIGHT as the herald-star of the morning; soft as the dew of evening; blooming as the flowers that deck the vale of Hyloki, was Syritha, the lovely daughter

of Thorir, King of Hleidra (1). Gentle was she as the doves of Yngvi; her presence was as a burst of sunlight, when it pierces the storm-clouds of the deep. White as the sparkling foam of the summer waves, when they rise by turns amidst the steep rocks, was the delicately-moulded breast of the royal maiden. Her eyes of tenderest azure, spread forth a beamy gladness in the hall; and her long fair tresses, floating in airy freedom, were like the saffron-tinted clouds of the flower-breathing dawn. Her cheek wore the rosy blush of the morning beam, when it breaks rejoicingly over the misty hills of the East; while her lip revealed the dewy brightness of the sea-born coral, where it makes glad the depths of some dim and hoary cave. When her delicate and jewelled hand, white as the snows of the heath, when they drift over the deep hollow, sought the golden wires of her harp, the stormy shout of heroes ceased. When she raised her voice in the pillared and lofty hall, the dark warriors listened with a wondering pleasure; they leaned pensively on their dark-brown shields; the beamy cup of embossed gold, crested with the sparkling mead, was forgotten; a tear of joy glistened in each softened eye, as its glance fell on the white, full-orbed, and gently-swelling bosom of the "Beauteous One." Each rugged ear was pervaded with a tender awe, as the strain of heaven-taught minstrelsie ascended from her lips of rapture. Her voice of music pierced through the innermost depths of each stern and war-

like spirit. The fierce brethren of the shield regarded her as the heroine of some lofty tale of other times; or she appeared to them as the radiant form of some dweller in the skies, seen amid the mysterious visions of the night. Thou wert the ruler of hearts, the sovereign of souls, high-bosomed, white-handed Syritha! Oh, how lovely is the small, white, slenderly-formed hand of woman, disporting amid the trembling wires of the harp! Does it not shew like the gleaming, feathery snow, when it lightly falls, in its fresh fair beauty; at once softening the gloom of the darkened sky, and clothing the bleak and barren earth with a celestial mantle—a garb of spirit sanctity?

Many warriors, mighty of deeds, sued for the hand of Syritha; but the King, her father, with the pride of his race, had vowed her to the embraces of a monarch like himself. The dark Hrothgar, chief of the giant race of Sogne (2), sought her in marriage, and was accepted of her haughty sire. Hrothgar was tall as the green tower of the oak, when it rises in solitary strength, on the brow of the lofty hill. But he was of an immoderate fierceness of mind: his soul was black as the thunder-cloud of midnight. The gore of innocence sat ever on his sword, and he loved to drink the tears of the sufferer. Men called him Hrothgar, the "Wolf of the Mountain" (3).

And the day of the marriage of the fair-haired daughter of Thorir with the stern-browed king of Sogne was come. The joyous guests had taken their

seats in the hall; the minstrels struck high their gilded harps, and sang the ancient glories of the Kings of Hleidra. The impatient bridegroom strode, ever and anon, through the wide gallery that led to the bride's chamber; and bade her attendants make known that he waited to present to her the richest gifts, ere she appeared before the assembled company. The maidens of her service whispered together with signs of fear. The King at length grew angry, and sent to enquire why she delayed her coming forth. Still she came not. Overcome by her fears, the noble Queen of Thorir hastened to seek her lovely child; and eftsoons was there heard, as proceeding from the chamber of the "Beauteous One," a loud wailing of voices; the piercing accents of wo shook the late festally-resounding walls. Whence that mournful outcry? The bride was nowhere to be found! Vainly had her maidens searched throughout the borders of the royal dwelling, fearful to disturb, while yet the slightest hope of her discovery remained, the prevailing mirth and pleasure of the bridal party.

Dark and terrible was the rage of Hrothgar, when the attendants told him that his expected bride, the fair Syritha, was nowhere to be seen. He swore, by the *megingjard* (4) of Thor (5), that he would find her or perish. He dashed into the woods—he aroused the vales with his shout of thunder. The King of Hleidra tore his hair and garments, in alternate transports of grief and rage. Fifty mounted hus-

carls (6), men of great trust, did he send forth in search of her.

Meantime the glorious sun rolled on in his strength; he reached the distant goal of the west; he sank, in solemn majesty, beneath the crimson waves of the ocean. The silver moon arose above the azure cliffs of the east, and spread her paly beams through the shadowy recesses of the far-surrounding forest. Still not a horseman had returned to the castle of the anxious monarch. The tears of the hapless mother fell like the winter rain; she mourned in heart for her tender child abandoned to the dangers of the midnight desert.

The lovely Syritha wandered amid the pathless forest; her hope was to reach the distant vale, where Veigur, the beloved of her soul, dwelt amid the green oaks of his sires. She glided like a sunbeam through the depths of the woods. The wild stag stood still to gaze upon her, as she passed along,—his big, round eye seeming to glow with joyful wonder. The birds, with cheerful minstrelsie, flew around her, and accompanied her, as she roved through the dusky intricacies of that sylvan solitude. But now the woods became more entangled; the evening sky was shut out by the thickly-meeting branches; and at length the way was choked up with opposing brambles. The gloom of night was soon afterwards added to the obscurity of the forest. The howl of the wolf was heard in the distance. The hapless fugitive wandered hither and

thither, vainly seeking to recover the traces of her former course. Then did a deeper sorrow pierce her forlorn breast; her weary step became yet more feeble; and she sank in tears upon the ground, upbraiding the cruelty of her sire, through whose harsh resolve she had been led to tempt the perils of the midnight wilderness. She thought of her tender mother, and of the grief she would endure for her loss, and her heart melted more and more.

And now the signs of an approaching tempest gave new alarm to her unprotected situation. The swollen shower-drops quickly descended; gleams of red-forked lightning careered wildly along the dusky avenues of the forest. Her fears were redoubled as she heard the rolling crash of the near thunder, seeming to call forth the savage dwellers of the waste, that answered each hollow resounding peal with their fierce, discordant cries. She sought some place of deeper shelter, and espying, with the aid of the lightning, a neighbouring cavern, directed her sad steps thither, determined to risk the chance of its being the abode of some larger beast of prey. But what may paint the terror of the unfortunate maiden, when, on approaching the entrance of the cavity, she discovered a mighty dragon couched in the dim hollow of the recess. His huge, flaming eyes shot forth additional fires, as he sprang forward, and, at the next fatal instant, encircled her in his loathly and threatening grasp! Vain, alas, were her shrieks and efforts to escape. As

the dark and hideous spider seizes upon the hapless fly entangled in its treacherous web, and drags, with horrid glee, the struggling and piteously-plaining victim to its den of accustomed murder; so, with rejoicing speed, bore that prodigious monster the fair and lovely Syritha to the dark wild recesses of his inmost habitation. But no words could express her surprise, when, on partially recovering from the trance of horror and despair into which she had been thrown by the effects of her sudden alarm, she heard human sounds proceed from the mouth of the dreadful captor.

"Loveliest Syritha," the monster cried, "I have long waited for this happy hour, and was even watching for thy approach at the very moment wherein thou camest. Know, that the Fates have decreed that, in this shadowy mansion, thou shouldst join thine enforced vows with those of the mighty Odin (7), plighted to thee under the form of the dragon of the wilderness (8); and that thou shouldst give birth, in this rugged solitude, to a male child, who shall be the most glorious warrior that ever shook back the thunder-clouds of war, or quaffed the bright mead from the skulls of his vanquished enemies. His name shall spread like a charm over the farthest bounds of the earth, and he shall be called after yon fiery gleam*

* *Asca,* lightning; a Swedish word, pointing through a dialectic medium to a Norse or Old Danish original. — E. O. (Ernest Oldworthy.)

that shall light up the troubled heavens at the moment of his majestic birth. Lo! the same wild torch awaits our nuptial rite. Here, beautiful Syritha, loved of my divinity, shalt thou dwell till the hour of thy travail be past; and thereafter shalt thou depart, with the offspring of our love, to the court of thy happy sire, who, having long repented of his resolve to match thee with the hated Hrothgar, shall welcome thee and thy little one with tenderness to his arms. Thy beloved mother, too, shall greet her recovered child with tears of grief-rewarding joy. Know that a dream of the night shall have revealed to them the will of Odin, and the fate which connected thee with his mighty embrace. No more—the voice of Destiny forbids delay!"

He led the still terrified and weeping captive by a long, circuitous descent, in utter darkness, to a deeper cavern, where a scene of strange and unexpected beauty accosted her bewildered eye. In the centre of a spacious and resplendent apartment, was a fountain of odorous waters, that rose to the domed and star-embellished roof, and descended, in a varying shower of surpassing grace, into a basin of curiously sculptured porphyry, enriched with gold,—making the sweetest music, as its sparkling drops fell into the clear bright water beneath. A thousand exotic shrubs cast a delicious perfume, which vied with that of the gliding lymph; while around were spacious and costly cages, wherein a multitude of joyous birds, of

the most delicate and beautiful plumage, poured forth a ceaseless concert of delightful sounds. The darkness was here dispelled by a circle of snowy lamps, that environed the gorgeous fountain, and spread a soft, silvery light through the furthest recesses of the chamber. In a deep alcove, at the extremity of this singular apartment, was a fair, luxuriously-ordered couch, with a lofty canopy of flame-coloured satin, embroidered with gems and gold.

And now the lamps, by slow degrees, lost their radiance; the song of the birds declined as the light grew less distinct,—even as, when the sun sets, the tenants of the leafy woods seek their repose; the lulling murmurs of the fountain alone dwelt on the ear, save when, at intervals, the distant thunder rolled faintly and solemnly above. In that mysterious hour, did the beautiful daughter of Thorir resign her subjugated charms to the strangely-terrible being whom destiny had unalterably designed as the sire of her famous offspring.

* * * * * * * *

And at the moment when the birth of Askew took place, the heavens were suddenly overcast; the red forked lightning streamed through the dusky recesses of the forest; and the loud rejoicing thunder shook the wild depths of the Dragon's Cave. Syritha gazed, with yearning emotion, on the features of her child. His brow was fair as the snowy cloud of the summer noon; and a smile of lofty beauty

played upon his tender cheek. Not a sigh, or a tear, or a plaint of childish sorrow, escaped his tranquil bosom; while every succeeding day brought fresh health and loveliness to his expanding frame. Wild and awe-inspiring voices would chant around his cradle, in the solemn midnight, the glorious achievements of the future hero. And it seemed, at times, as if the noble infant beheld aërial forms bending over his place of repose; for he would smile with sudden rapture, and stretch forth his glowing arms, as if to clasp some near object unseen by his watchful mother. Often would strains of delicious harmony float at sun-rise through the surrounding wilderness; and at such moments would the lovely Syritha kneel beside the mysterious couch of her little one, and supplicate the blessing of the mighty deity, whom she then more immediately regarded as present, and partaking of her joy as a parent.

* * * * * * * *

And, after some time, she retraced the depths of the forest, bearing her lovely burthen with the joyful feelings of a happy mother. It was an eve of summer's softest beauty; the light, transparent clouds were peacefully reclining amid the rich amber glow of the serene west; and the strains of countless birds made glad the bright green solitudes that surrounded her flowery path. At length, the halls of her birth rose majestic on her sight, while the tear of exquisite pleasure rolled down her fair and hope-

illumined cheek, as imagination fondly painted the eager caress of her beloved mother, and the reviving tenderness of her long-revered sire. But greater joy was yet in store for the late sufferer, than even the proudest dream of hope had pictured. Whom beheld she on reaching the royal threshold, but the object of her ardent affection, the noble and now exulting Veigur; who, folding her, with transport in his yearning breast, bore her with unspeakable delight, into the expecting presence of her happy parents. She flew to their embrace,—her tender and beauteous charge sharing the impassioned welcome due to the sole and long-lost child of their fervent love. They gazed, with mingled pride and pleasure, on the predicted hero of their ancient, illustrious, and yet to be more glorious race. The mighty purpose of the benign Odin had been revealed in visions of the night to the royal parents, and to the now admitted lover; and, on the succeeding day, ere yet the joyous sun had reached the mid-heavens, the assembled nobles and people witnessed the princely solemnities which proclaimed the union of the gallant Veigur with the beautiful daughter of the King of Hleidra.

CHAPTER V.

HARALLD OF UPSAL'S "ANNALS OF THE EXPLOITS OF ASKEW, KING OF LETHRA."—EXTRACTS CONTINUED.—MORTAL COMBAT BETWEEN HROTHGAR AND VEIGUR.

A bearded age : an age of swords :
An age of winds : an age of wolves :
Shields will be cloven.

Völuspá.

Enn thar Hroptr kys
Hverian dag
Vapndauda vera.
Miöc er audkent
Theim er til Odins koma
Sal-kynni at sía :
Scioldom er soi thakidr,
Bryniom um beck i strád.

Grimnismál.

We now quote a passage, which affords a contrasting picture to the scene of blissful repose represented in the latter portion of the preceding chapter. The haughty Hrothgar, incensed at the intelligence of Syritha's nuptials with his late rival, challenges the latter to a deadly combat:—

The fierce tempest howled through the dim woods of Hleidra; the cry of the spectres of the storm-cloud

rent the solitude of the surrounding vales. The terrible voice of Hrothgar was heard upon the gale; less fearful was the sound of the thunder, that shook the cliffs of the mountain of Torstein. He blew a shrill blast on his bugle of war, and the eagle fled from the alarmed heights, as the raging echoes darted from rock to rock. His black, gigantic steed pawed, with fierce disdain, the trembling earth; while, with impatient shout, its furious rider dared the noble Veigur to the conflict.

Glad was the soul of that renowned chief to meet the strong in arms; he sprang from his couch; his war-trappings were speedily adjusted to his manly form; and he bound, with a soldier's pride, the treasured falchion to his thigh. His snowy steed awaits him, with a cheerful neigh, at the expanded gate. He vaults lightly on its majestic back. His radiant shield and spear are furnished by his faithful attendants; and he rides forth, with a conscious smile of successful defiance, to meet the haughty and insulting challenger.

"Look on yon black cloud," disdainfully cried the 'Wolf of the Mountain,' "and behold thy prepared shroud; list to the hollow moan of the scudding blast, and hear thy awakening death-song.—By the bed of the brood-dragon, thou meetest weapon of foeman for the last time!" He uttered his cry of war, and, dashing his spurs into his charger's flank, rushed, at full speed, towards his expecting enemy, who advanc-

ing with equal impetuosity to the encounter, opposed a fair aim to his furious assault. The shock was terrible. The recoiling horses were thrown upon their haunches, and fell over their firmly-seated riders. Wood and mountain rolled back the thunder-like crash of armour and weapons. The blood of both warriors stained the shaken earth. Syritha and her aged sire beheld the dreadful contest from a near tower. The loving wife knelt in prayer to the Father of gods and men, that he would watch over the safety of her cherished defender.

The infuriated warriors again prepared for the shock of the combat; again they met with gleaming spears. Not less terror-striking was the onset. Once more the blood rolled down the polished shields; the spears of both were splintered to the grasp. They drew their swords, and spurred violently against each other. Helm and shield resounded with the increasing force of their blows. Like a wild boar in the forest of Yngvi was Hrothgar; but Veigur was firm as the grove of giant oaks that frowns over the soaring steeps of the Cleft Hill. They fought like the winds of the tempest in the black and starless night.

Hrothgar's shield was cloven in twain; the helm of Veigur was rent asunder. The fate of the battle seemed poised in equal scales. One mighty, far-echoing stroke succeeded another; the fiery horses tore each other's opposing form; the fierce, unshrinking combatants were bathed, from crest to spur, in

the crimson tide of havoc. At length, the sword of Veigur prevailed; the cold blue steel rushed through the heart of his gigantic adversary. Hrothgar fell, with a stifled oath of despairing vengeance, and the plain resounded with the tumult of his overthrow. Then did the minstrels of Hleidra strike the chords of joy; the shouts of the assembled warriors arose to the vaulted heavens; while the mountains, and the battlements of the castle, gave back the long-renewed cry of "Victory to Veigur!"

CHAPTER VI.

HARALLD OF UPSAL'S "ANNALS OF THE EXPLOITS OF ASKEW, KING OF LETHRA."—EXTRACTS CONTINUED: THE DEATH OF SYRITHA, AND GRIEF OF HER DISCONSOLATE HUSBAND.

Invidious Grave! how dost thou rend asunder
Whom love has knit, and sympathy made one!
A tie more stubborn far than nature's band.

BLAIR.

THE death of Syritha, and the grief of her disconsolate husband, are thus described:—

The plaintive notes of the autumnal breeze were heard amid the deepening shades of the forest of Hleidra, seeming to mourn the lingering departure of the orb of day, as it sank, in solemn majesty, beneath the western billows. The dark clouds of approaching night rested on the distant mountain, and the brightness of the near vale became gradually more obscured. Alas, a gloom deeper than that of Nature hung over the royal halls of Thorir. The strain of the minstrel was mute, and unheard the voice of the gladdened warrior. No sound, save the heavy groan of despair, or the sigh of prevailing sorrow, broke in upon the awe-chilled silence of that now mournful abode. As

faded the sunbeam from the dewy meadow, so did the light of life wane from the lovely brow of the honoured Syritha. As the fast-spreading shadows gathered over the joyless landscape, lo! the heavier veil of death descended on the beauteous features of the beloved wife of Veigur. Fondly did she sigh her last blessing on the loved around her—on those aged and grief-worn parents—on him the lord of her virgin heart and sponsal faith; and on that tenderly-regarded and noble infant, whose destined renown she was thus forbidden to witness. A few scalding tears, a few broken words of farewell greeting, and the bounds of earth were passed; her spirit arose like the beams of the morning to blend itself with the eternal brightness of a world of changeless repose. Then sorrow sat upon the heart of the bereaved Veigur, as the black clouds of winter upon the desert heath. The face of man became hateful. He rushed through the dells, where the shadows of night ever lingered; he sought the deepest recesses of the forest; he called upon echo to repeat his lamentation. His soul was desolate as the hall of the chief, when the fires of his race are extinguished. Not less heavy was the weight of grief that bowed down the hearts of the afflicted parents, who, from the decays of failing age, might less endure the burthen which oppressed them.

The voice of winter was again heard in the midnight storm; the swollen torrents rolled furiously to the plain; the aged trees of the rugged cliffs were

borne away by the bellowing waters, and plunged, with hollow reverberations, into the affrighted valley. The soul of Veigur still sought the loneliness of nature's wildest scenes; the direful sounds of the tempest alone found an echo in the gloomy depths of his spirit.

CHAPTER VII.

HARALD OF UPSAL'S "ANNALS OF THE EXPLOITS OF ASKEW, KING OF LETHRA."—EXTRACTS CONTINUED: THE PROLONGED SORROW AND PATERNAL SOLICITUDE OF VEIGUR.—DEATH OF THORIR AND HIS QUEEN.—HOMAGE OF THE "FYLKI-KONGR" AND NOBLES TO THE INFANT KING ASKEW.—CURIOUS OMEN, AND GIFT OF ENCHANTED SWORD.

These eyes, these tear-swoln eyes beheld her fall:
Ah, no—she lives on some far happier shore,
She lives—but (cruel thought!) she lives for me no more!

SHAW.

CAM. I very well agree with you in the hopes of him: it is a gallant child; one that indeed physics the subject, makes old hearts fresh; they, that went on crutches ere he was born, desire yet their life, to see him a man.

Winter's Tale, Act i. sc. 1.

Rocked and cradled in a shield,
Whose infant food a helm did yield.

YIELDING to the emotions of sorrow, and seeking to draw fresh food for the maintenance of his grief, the unhappy chieftain continues to wander amid the forests and mountains; careless whither his wayward steps may lead him, so that he avoids the presence of aught that may turn his thoughts from the deep overwhelming sense of his loss. At length his disturbed mind finds an interval of calmer meditation; he seems to awake from the troubled scenes of a long and fearful

dream; and, under the returning spell of reason, he is reminded of the claims of the infant-prince on his ever-watchful attention. Regarding this sacred trust as a means of grateful acknowledgment, whereby he may best evince how deep is his surviving affection; he determines to devote every hour of remaining life to the sole object of watching over the education and welfare of his illustrious charge. Our next extract describes the homage paid by the *Fylki-Kongr*, or provincial kings, and the nobles, to the infant Askew, on his succeeding to the crown of Thorir, his grandfather. It may be remarked that the sovereigns of Lethra were the first monarchs of the North, that shook off the elective appointment, and established an hereditary succession of their thrones:—

And Thorir and his queen were gathered to the mighty of their race. The crown of ancient Lethra descended on the brows of the child Askew. And on a certain day did Veigur call together, by his deputed power, the various Fylki-Kongr, Jarlls, Thegns, and ministers, who were under the sceptre of his infant son, that they might unto him perform due homage, in like manner as in times past, their sires, and others had done to his royal forefathers. The great mead-hall called the "Hall of Dragon Shields," resounded with the strain of the minstrel; the glad voices of the warriors ascended to the mighty roof. Many a foaming cup of the sparkling mead was drained to the

health of the heir of Thorir, and in honour of the noble Veigur. At length the royal child was brought into the hall, naked, and on a shield of iron. Then louder still arose the exulting shouts of the admiring heroes, who beheld, in the firmly-moulded form, and bold, sprightly features, of the boy, a high promise of the deeds of manly honour that were predicted of him. With true reverence did all present bow at his feet, and kiss the rosy hand which, with smiling and ready grace, he held forth to each; while, from time to time, with the eager delight of an active spirit, he grasped the bending crest of a warrior, as some more curious device gleamed from the helm of him that knelt. Thus, the "Pine-tree and Bugle-horn" of the fur-clad Sweno of the Strong Arm, the "Castle on Fire" of Weolmund of Yngvi, surnamed the "Arrow of Death," and the "Arm and Thunderbolt" of Tiugoskegg of the White Rocks, more pleasingly fixed his attention. And when all had done homage, with knee and heart, to the royal heir, the black-haired Jarll, Snothro, surnamed the "Bulwark of the Borders," said to his brother Thegns, "Lo! I will offer a steel dudgeon and a dish of cates to the noble child; and may Odin give us the joy to perceive, that, spurning the petty temptation of the junkets, he grasp, with joyous preference, the noble implement of warfare." The eyes of the bearded warriors lightened with applauding pleasure; a hoarse burst of gleeful acclamation resounded on every side. Then,

taking from his girdle an old and battered blade, the trusty companion of its fierce master in many an iron feud, and deadly war-fight; and receiving, from the hand of an attendant, a dish of sweetmeats, he approached the unsuspecting child, on whose preference of the one or other gift, was destined to rest their augury of good or evil, as to his future disposition. A deep silence bespoke the anxious interest of the spectators. The chief with the black locks knelt, and presented, for the choice of the smiling infant, the weapon and the cates. Askew cast his eye on either, and with a bold and resolved manner, that might well have befitted a pirate-king in his very wantonness of power, instantly seized on BOTH! A thunderlike din of voices and weapons hailed this glorious omen of the future acts of the heir of Lethra; while Snothro rising, with a ringing laugh that was heard above the cheerful tumult, swore, by the dragon of the hills, that the noble lad would be a banner of glory to his people. Then Hrædla, the boast of the Gar-Danes, surnamed the "Bear of the North," the chief of the mountain-warriors of Torstein, drew from his giant form a massively-studded belt and ancient spada, or broad-sword, of extraordinary length and temper, beautifully adorned with gold and jewels, and which had for many ages belonged to the heroes of his race. "This sword," said he, "in times of old, was forged by Sindri, the armourer of the Æsir, for Odin himself In one of the wars waged by the god and his

brethren with the Trölds or giants, this goodly weapon, by the contrivance of the treacherous Lokè, fell into the hands of his enemies. From Hring, one of their mighty band, were my forefathers and myself descended. I am old and childless—the last of my ancient line. Noble Veigur, to you I yield the charge of the sword of Odin. Askew, as his offspring, may well inherit the matchless blade. Its blaze is lightning—it will burn up the foe. Hosts will fall before it (9). May the god of war, whose delight is in blood, mark with exultation, from his seat in Asgard (10), the glorious deeds which shall yet be performed with this noble weapon!"

"When he drew it, the hall glistened
As with shine of lightning flash, or the brighter Boreal lustre.
From gold chased the hilt was wrought, and the blade with runes resplendent,
Wonderful, not kenn'd i' th' North; haply near the Solar portals
Kenn'd; the country of our sires, ere led hither by the Æsir.
When the land reposed in peace, gleam'd the signs with softened lustre;
But when Hildur 'gan her sport, not the crest of pitted game-bird
Reddens with so deep a hue, as their ireful flame presented.
Ill presaged its meteor blaze, glaring in the night of battle.
Widely was the weapon famed, and 'mongst Northern weapons peerless."

Then did Veigur, with a glad heart and gracious thanks, receive, in the name of the royal infant, the valued gift; while the assembled heroes regarded the offering as another omen of the prosperous career, and surpassing renown, of the future illustrious warrior.

CHAPTER VIII.

HARALLD OF UPSAL'S "ANNALS OF THE EXPLOITS OF ASKEW, KING OF LETHRA."—EXTRACTS CONTINUED: EARLY HEROISM OF KING ASKEW.—ATHLETIC EXERCISES AND SPORTS OF HIS YOUTH.—EXPLOITS OF LATER AGE.—"FITT OF HREGGVIDARNAUTR, THE CHIEF SCALLD, IN HONOUR OF KING ASKEW."

But ah! what kingly form
Roams the lone desert's desolated maze,
Unaw'd! nor heeds the sweeping storm.

OGILVIE.

And at the approach of night,
On the first friendly bank he throws him down,
Or rests his head upon a rock till morn.

ADDISON.

Patient of toil; serene amidst alarms;
Inflexible in faith; invincible in arms.

BEATTIE.

THE early habits of the Infant-king are thus alluded to:—

He would sit and gaze, with a delighted eye, on the black vapours descending upon the mountains and the valley, when the spirit of the storm, rejoicing in its strength, flung a veil of darkness over the startled noon. He loved to listen to the winds, when, with unchallenged fury, they bowed the mighty

oaks of the forest to their base. Sweet to his ear was the dash of the rolling fragments of rock, when the wintry torrent rushed impetuously from the mountain's brow, spreading wide desolation over the affrighted vale beneath. He would stand, for hours, upon the sea-heights, marking, with eager joy, the black, wild billows, as they leaped and fumed, and burst with threatening violence, over the broken and rocky shore. But, more than aught besides, he loved to watch the red lightning play with the dark masses of tempest-cloud, and to hear the roaring thunder, as it swept like a giant across the mountain-waste,—its mighty echoes darting from cliff to cliff, in the deep and solemn midnight.

Infancy merges into boyhood, boyhood expands into youth: the heroic spirit of the child now shews itself in the habitual love of danger, and a preference for active enjoyment:—

He pursued the flying hart through the depths of the hoary wood; or chased the fierce white boar from its forest-haunt. The wolf of the wold died upon his sword, and the mountain bear fled to its dusky cavern in vain. His swift step dared the slippery height, where the dizzy crags seemed to shudder, as they hung gazingly over the hideous gulfs below; and he would launch his small and fragile bark on the mountain billow, when the rushing storm-winds yelled their fiercest defiance to the battling spirits of the deep.

Often, in the tempest-night, did he spurn the purple couch, and sheltering roof, of the palace-hall, and pursue his hardy slumbers under the forest oak, or the impending rock. His hand was ever on the bow or the javelin, and his foot in the stirrup. He would dash his fiery charger through the rolling floods, and over the broken rocks, casting afar the two-edged silver dart, with unfailing aim, in the midst of his fleet career. Or, if on foot, tracking the flight of his far-soaring Norvegian falcons, he would clamber, with his fierce hounds, over lofty steeps obscured with dense woods, or leap acoss the dark ravines, or rush through the dangerous marshes, hastily testing his path by his long staff, or hunting pole, while, ever and anon, the shrill blast of his mighty horn, or his yet more piercing voice, spread a thousand echoes through the shaken wilderness.

Years roll onward, and nature proclaims him man. Sprung from the loins of Odin himself, he looked the god-born, kingly warrior that he was. His hardihood, agility, and intrepidity increase with his maturity. We here quote the song of Hreggvidarnautr, the chief of the royal scállds, which describes, with a characteristic energy of effect, the person and feats of the now famous chief, who excelled all of his day in strength, stature, activity, and skill as a warrior. In an age of heroic valour and adventurous peril, his enterprises had surpassed those of the most daring champions.

THE FITT OF HREGGVIDARNAUTR, THE CHIEF SCALLD, IN HONOUR OF KING ASKEW.

Fill high the bright cup with the mead's sparkling flame,
  Bid the banners unfolded their blazonry yield;
While, with souls on our lips, in one voice we proclaim—
  "Here's a Health to the Chief of the famed 'Dragon Shield!'"

Be each sword from the scabbard triumphantly torn,
  Point to point let them meet o'er the bowl-covered board (11);
And, while high o'er each head waves the full-flowing horn,
  Let us shout—"Here's to Askew, proud Lethra's dread lord!"

Drink—drink!—there's no name in the annals of old,
  Though proud be the deeds of the North's storied clime,
That may boast the high worth now by Hildur enrolled
  In the red-flaming runes of her record sublime!

I am old, and my thin-flowing tresses are grey,
  They, that once wore the hue of the bright sunny mead!
Yet my heart must be cold as the death-stricken clay,
  If it rouse not to welcome each glorious deed!

Proud chief of a line that from Odin drew birth!
  The noblest, where all were of princeliest strain!
Yet far more exceeding, if measured by worth,
  The sole honoured standard which heroes need claim.

Shall the voice of the minstrel not echo thy praise,
  Thou, whose board is still free to the pilgrim of song?
Who lov'st the sweet chant of his heart-quickening lays,
  And mark'st the due claims that to genius belong (12)?

Oh, not now, when the feast hath but lately been spread,
  When the goblets still shine with the mead's circling joy,
Would the bard of thy fathers alone seek to shed
  Fresh light on thy glory—time's shades to destroy!

But if woe and misfortune thy steps should surround,
If evil oppress thee, if grief be thy dower,
E'en then should the notes of thy minstrel be found
To lighten the gloom of life's weariest hour.

Then, as now, would I bid the harp's numbers ascend
To recount the bold deeds that are brightest in story;
Then, as now, would I seek newer honours to lend,
And wake once again each fair scene of thy glory!

And not I, thus unchanging, were witnessed alone—
Each heart in this hall but re-echoes my boast,
When I deem that the faith, in long perils oft shown,
Would grow brighter, as darkness should challenge it most!

Then fill the proud goblet from flagons of gold,
Bid new trophies around us their pageantry yield;
While, with hearts still exulting, we cry, as of old—
"Here's a health to the Chief of the famed 'Dragon Shield!'"

Drink—drink!—while around you bright faces give back
The red light from the pines' ample billets high glowing;
While the harp but recalls the loved scenes of life's track,
And the lamps shine above, and the light mead is flowing!

Oh, ne'er felt my soul such a freedom from care,
Ne'er revelled my fancy 'mid themes so excelling,
As now, when I gaze on each warrior's bold air;
On each maid's snowy charms, that adorn this proud dwelling!

I am old—yet to Beauty's enlivening smiles
Both my harp and my heart noblest tribute would bear;
For I deem there's no guerdon, for Valour's dread toils,
Half so bright as the laurel bestowed by the fair!

Ye souls of my fathers—the famous in song!
Hover round the lone harp of your lowliest son;
While, with faithful devotion, he strives to prolong
The praise by your heart-searching melody won!

Aid his spirit to seek, through the past's noble page,
For each warlike achievement, each deed of renown;
And to trace the great acts of each hero and sage,
With a skill not unworthy to match with your own!

Ah! I feel the glad rush of wild song through my soul!
Bold and free, it exults, as the breeze o'er the mountain!
No longer its tide may my spirit control,
While it bursts, in bright glee, like the foam from the fountain!

Drink—drink!—there are warriors amongst us to-night,
That might challenge the noblest which earth ever knew;
Sage, valiant, unrivalled in council or fight,—
Nor bolder, nor wiser, than loyal and true!

Tiugoskegg's shield is a castle of strength!
At one stroke, thy axe, Aggo, an oak-tree would fell!
Hialmar's wild spear mocks the pine in its length,
Still seen where the billows of fight madly swell!

Son of blood! who art thou, with the bright beacon-crest,
From thy spur to thy war-plume all sheathed in red gore?
Let the pale lightning answer, whose weapon is drest
In less dread than the strokes "Arm-of-Iron" doth pour!

Hark—hark!—through each glen rings a bugle so shrill,
It might call up the dead from their dwellings of old:
The wolf shrinks aghast to his hold on the hill,
For he knows that Death rides with dark Rolf o'er the wold!

There are Gormo and Haco, 'Wild Boars of the Wood,'
Prompt to slay, slow to fly, first in foray and fight:
Twin brothers in carnage, as well as in blood,—
Whose blades cleave a path with the tempest's own might!

Oh, had I the thunder's stern echoes to blend
With the fierce-roaring sound of the ocean's wild sphere,
I might wake not such awe, as on foes doth attend,
When the name of dread Askew falls deep on the ear!

Then, though bright be the mead foaming o'er the glad brim,
And though sweet the light clash of the harp's thrilling wire;
Far sweeter to share each wild peril with him,
Mid the red-rolling fight, or the tempest's dark ire!

Then, fill, fill the cup, till it gush o'er the rim,
Be each hand on the sword, and each helm on the brow;
And, while high o'er each crest floats the banner of him,
Whose name is a stronghold—the dread of each foe,—

Be this the proud boast of our new-waked alliance,—
And what dearer hopes could our destiny yield,
Than to revel in danger, set fate at defiance,
Led on by the Chief of the famed "Dragon Shield?"

His eyes are the stars of the midnight's soft calm,
When the winds are all hushed, and the storm-cloud hath ceased;
And the smiles which illume his cheek have the charm
That is felt when the morn-beam springs fresh from the East!

Yet if anger awaken the pride of his brow,
His glance like the bolt of the lightning hath power;
And the frown which replaces that smile's sunny glow,
Bears the gloom of the tempest when thunder-clouds lour!

His form is the oak, in the verdure of Spring,
Majestic and calm, on the mountain's high brow;
Sweet and gentle his voice, as the echoes that cling
To the hawthorn when Ædon's (13) soft melodies flow!

But if fury stir up the wild depths of his soul,
That form grows terrific—an earthquake in power;
And that voice becomes fierce as the torrents which roll
Down the Mountains' sharp cliffs, in the Winter's dark hour!

Son of Odin! thy name is a passport to Fate!
Thy path is the whirlwind, or ocean's vexed flood!
O'er its war-spears bold-rising, thy banner elate
To each foe seems a thunder-cloud bursting in blood!

Lo! in Valhall's wide halls spreads the feast in its glory!
  Blest Odin exults, with each war-honoured mate:
There the kings, scállds, and heroes, high mentioned in story,
  With garments resplendent, are seated in state.

I hear the full sound of their far-reaching mirth,
  The speech of each warrior falls quick on mine ear:
"How blest," cries aged Thorir (still thinking of earth)
  "Were the form of our own noble Askew but here!"

"Askew! child of my love!" thus great Odin exclaims,
  "Each dark moment I chide that withholds his embrace!"
Then Tingoskegg, Aggo, Hialmar he names,
  Thorkill, Gormo and Haco, and Rolf, of high race!

"Speed—speed the fond hour, ushered in by kind fate,
  When the son and the sire a blest union shall know;
And till then the bold chief and each high-deeded mate
  May well claim the proud boast of a Valhall below!"

Chorus.

Then fill the bright cup with the meads sparkling flame,
  Bid the banners, unfolded, their blazonry yield;
While, with souls on our lips, in one voice we proclaim—
  "Here's a health to the Chief of the famed 'Dragon Shield!'"

Be each sword from the scabbard triumphantly torn,
  Point to point let them meet o'er the bowl-covered board;
And, while high o'er each head waves the full-flowing horn,
  Let us shout—"Here's to Askew—proud Lethra's dread lord!"

CHAPTER IX.

HARALLD OF UPSAL'S "ANNALS OF THE EXPLOITS OF ASKEW, KING OF LETHRA."—EXTRACTS CONTINUED: THE BATTLE OF LETHRA, FOUGHT BETWEEN SIGURD, KING OF SOGNE (BROTHER OF HROTHGAR), AND KING ASKEW. —SONG OF HREGGVIDARNAUTR, THE CHIEF SCALLD, BEFORE THE FIGHT— "THE HERO OF LETHRA." —"SONG OF VICTORY," BY ANGURVADEL, MIMUNGR, BRYNTHVARI, NAGELLRING, DRAGVENDILL, SIGURLIOMI, THIDREK, AND HRAUNGVITHR, THE SCALLDS OF KING ASKEW.

Son of the chief of generous steeds: Strong arm in every perilous toil: Cut down the foe: Be thine arm like thunder: Thine eyes like fire: Thy heart of solid steel: Whirl round thy sword as a meteor of night, and lift thy shield like the flame of death.

OSSIAN.

AWAKE, Askew, thou mighty son of Odin, up rise from thy purple couch! Still sleeps the mist on the silent lake, and the mountains rear their peaks amid the clouds of darkness. But there is an enemy at thy gate! Lo! Sigurd, the brother of Hrothgar, the "Wolf of the Mountain," cometh to revenge the death of his dark kinsman. Already do his spreading warriors furiously encircle thy proud castle, and swear to level it with the clods of the valley. Arise, call together thy palace-band, thy dear brethren in the war-

field. Bid the noble Thorkill shake off the slumbers of the night—he whose spear, like thine own, maketh the battle-clouds to descend in showers of blood! Let the giant son of Ulfr start forth, on whose helmet the wreath of victory is yet green—whose youthful sword still reeks with the blood of his maiden foe. The "Wild boars of the wood," Gormo and Haco, whose darts are as the fiery bolts of the tempest, will join their wild strength with thy own; and the stream of Halvar shall be red with the slaughter of the "Mountain Wolves!" The sons of Sogne shall perish! Askew! child of the Dragon, son of conquest, arise! grasp thy silver spear, thy snowy steed prepare, and haste thee to the strife of shields! Up rise, thou Dragon of the onslaught!

Up rose the mighty son of Odin. The brave Thorkill flung the shadows of sleep from his brow. The giant son of Ulfr grasped, with eager joy, his reddened anlace(14). Up rose the "Wild Boars of the Wood," Gormo and Haco, panting with impatience to seek their devoted prey. Hialmar of the High Mountain, and the black-locked Thoralf, sprang from their wolf-skin bed on the Northern watch-tower, and howled, in their gleeful exultation, like the winds of the mid-night, when the forest oaks of Yngvi bow before their stormy rage.

The fitful blaze of the rapidly-kindled torches shewed the gliding forms of the white-robed scállds, as they hastened to the royal chamber, already

thronged with eager warriors. While the noble Askew and his devoted followers were arming, the majestic and wildly-impassioned voice of Hreggvidarnautr was heard above the tumult, as he chaunted the prophetic strain of victory. The mighty burthen of the strain, as shared amongst his brethren of the "art divine," bore to the ear of the quickly-assembling troops the oracular assurance of success.

THE HERO OF LETHRA.

Bring me my starry shield,
   Bring me my sword of fire;
Shake out our banners' sleeping folds,
   And wake the trumpet-choir!
Wave the wild spears around,
   Instinct with deadly glee:
Ho! Conquest, ope thy crimson gates,
   This day I give to thee!

Around, from heart to lip,
   Let joy's bold accents ring;
For soon proud Sogne's coasts and bay
   Shall greet a stranger-king!
Wave high the "Dragon's" flaming sign,
   Roll wide the shout of glee;
Ho! Conquest, ope thy crimson gates,
   This day I give to thee!

Raise high the columned shout,
   Swell wide the trumpet call;
As a bursting cloud shall our ranks spread forth,
   And their trenchant blows shall fall
Like the stones of hail, when the dread winds shake
   The crest of the forest tree:
Ho, Conquest! ope thy crimson gates,
   This day I give to thee!

GRAND CHORUS.

Wave high the "Dragon's" flaming sign,
Roll wide the shout of glee:
Ho! Conquest, ope thy crimson gates,
This day I give to thee!

A burst of deafening cheers greeted the honoured minstrels. The walls of the mighty castle rang with the clash of the gathering of weapons, and with the hurried putting on of war-trappings. Hermold of the Lake unfurled, and gave to the gleam of the torches the spacious banner bearing the gold couchant "Dragon" of their illustrious chief. Tiugoskegg of the White Rocks brandished his fiery lance with a shout that drave the awakened eagle from his dizzy perch on the cliffs of Torstein. The eyes of Aggo of the Cleft Hill glared with red flame, as he stood accoutred in brazen armour that was still ruddy with the tokens of his last encounter. The sword of Thorkill seemed to send forth sparks of joy, as it tossed back the glitter of the torchlight. The son of Ulfr shook the pavement of the mead-hall with the butt of his steel-mounted spear, and laughed like the terrible hyen (15) of the midnight.

The "Dragon of the Shield" (16) struck his sounding war-board with his ponderous spada. The fierce-browed children of Hillda gathered round at the signal. Attention sealed up their lips. They stood motionless as the statues of their gods.

"Warriors," cried the illustrious chief, "the brother

of the once haughty Hrothgar speaketh words of defiance at our gate. The blast of his bugle of war mingles with the shrill moan of the night-wind. Like a storm of hail let us descend upon the foe; let us crush them like the grapes in the wine-press of the west. Like the rushing clouds of the winter-storm shall be our approach. Furious as the dragons of the Brown Lake, will we burst upon them. The followers of Sigurd shall fall like the corn of autumn beneath the sickle of the reaper. We will give their flesh to the eagles!"

Rose high the din of shields, rose high the shout of battle. Turret and tower, moss and mountain, gave back the rolling thunders of the war-cheer.

"They come—they come!" exclaimed the exulting Sigurd, scarcely able to rein back his furiously-pawing steed, "Wolves of the Mountain! ye the favoured of victory, remember the fate of Hrothgar! The blood of a kingly leader shouteth for revenge! Be your blades as keen of stroke as the red-winged lightning, when it blasts the many-armed oak of the forest. As the fierce winds career over the roaring waves, so let us ride over the howling foe! We will bathe from helm to heel in the vaunted blood of the 'Dragon.' We will wrap yon fated towers, and yon proudly-spreading city, in hissing streams of funeral flame. The black ravens shall banquet in the halls of Hleidra!"

A thousand spears struck the pointed shields; a

thousand voices gave note that one mighty heart dwelt in that steel-clad host; the lust of slaughter glowed with impetuous fierceness. The early light of morning gave to view their beloved banner, the far-dreaded "Wolf," that seemed already to triumph in the blood of the enemy.

Rides forth the mighty Askew, his stately and gigantic steed, "Wing of the Wind," champing the golden bit, and neighing a proud defiance to the threatening foe. The spreading shields of his host show like the morning sky. The flaming "Dragon" nods exultingly over the helms and spears of Hleidra. The iron bridge of the castle is crossed; the advancing troops are marshalled on the plain. At the far-resounding command of Askew, they halt, and he approaches singly the forces of Sigurd. He bids the threatening Prince of Sogne come forth, and avenge the death of his brother at the point of his own weapon. Sigurd, in reply, flung his quivering spear at the renowned warrior, and remained amid the protecting band of his strong chiefs. The cowardly missile was scornfully repelled by the broad shield of the now furious monarch. Like a bull, when gored by the hunters, did Askew rush to the strife, signalling his impatient host to advance.

The darts of destruction were now showered on either side; the opposing war-cries stunned the vaulted heavens. Dreadful was the rush of the closing troops. Like the waves of the tempest-sea, dashing their white

spray over the dark cliffs of the shore, was the spreading burst of the silver shields and whitely-shining blades of the sons of the "Dragon," as they encountered the dusky war-boards and purple brands of the "Mountain Wolves." The glancing light came swiftly from the east; the bright cresset of the heavens appeared above the azure rim of the peaceful horizon. The joyous emblem of Odin seemed sweetly to smile on the fitful play of swords, and on the heavy shock of the descending war-bills. Still did thick flights of steel darken the air; the sharp arrow and the pointed ategar clave through helm, shield, and corslet. Backward and forward, like two opposing seas in battling wrath, sways the varying fight. Many a gaping wound sends forth its crimson torrent. The raging horses shriek and plunge in the thunder-like tumult of the struggle. Cloven shields, broken weapons, scattered plumes, fragments of armour, battered drums, severed limbs, dismembered corses, are strewn, in wildest confusion, along the gore-empurpled plain. Let us gaze, with steady eye, on the scene of terror.

Thorkill, surnamed "Arm-of-Iron" (17), thins the host of Ragnar the Dauntless; their clashing shields are red as the moon of autumn. Gormo and Haco riot like the demons of slaughter; countless are the victims of their rage. The sharp lance of the son of Ulfr pierces the breast of Svein the Fair. Rolla sinks beneath the axe of Hermold of the Lake. Hialmar, Thoralf, Tiugoskegg, and Aggo, rush into the

thickest fight; the enemy give way as they advance. Tiugoskegg's sword passes through the heart of Erick; he sinks upon the corse of Svein. Aggo advances his spacious shield against the breast of Tryggva; his sword cleaves the brain of the helmed foe, like the thunderbolt through the oak. Hialmar mows down the fiercest in the field. Thoralf is red with living gore. His arm is like that of the tempest in its strength. Guthormr the Giant soars aloft like the beams of the morning sun, when they burst over the shadowy ridges of the mountain. Hosts sink before him. Tiugoskegg, Aggo, Hialmar fall beneath his hand. At length, he meets the terrible Askew. The prodigious weapon of the Dragon Chief cleaves him from the crest to the eyes. Palnatoko, surnamed the "Cloud of Blood," whose blows are like the falling meteor in swiftness, brandishes aloft his crooked anlace. He rushes, with tempest speed, to give battle to the renowned prince of Hleidra. He burns to revenge the death of his friend. The doom of Guthormr awaits him. The resistless sword of the royal champion passes through the heart of the lofty chief, and, with a stifled oath of vengeance, the gallant son of the aged Snono sinks forward and dies. Harfragre, Eywind, and Gudrod, the noblest remaining pillars of the throne of Sogne, rush too late to the relief of Palnatoko. Like the waves of ocean, when lashed by the storm-winds of winter, they advance against the dauntless sovereign of Hleidra. He repels

them like the rock of ages, that smiles on the recoiling billows of the deep. His sword descends furiously on the helm of Gudrod; the dark chief of the Hills utters a vain prayer for revenge, and falls backwards a corse. Harfragre next feels the deadly steel glide through his breast—in an instant afterwards, the shades of death swim before his eyes. Pierced through the brain by the swiftly-glancing weapon of his dreadful adversary, Eywind sinks with a shrill cry of defiance yet ringing from his throat. Vikia, from the rugged wilds of Gothland, is conspicuous among the foes of Askew. His shield is round as the moon of harvest, and his spear is tall as the ancient towers of Syrstrond (18). On the hill, beside the blasted oak of Torstein, he challenges to the combat the princely chief. The gleam of their swords is like the quick play of the lightnings, when they leap along the deck of the storm-tossed bark; and the crash of their meeting shields is as the deep-volleyed roll of the grinding thunder, when it shakes the tall cliffs of the Mountain of Eagles. Furious as the wolf of midnight, the savage warrior assaults the noble Askew; his ponderous blade resounds on the shield of the "Dragon." The blows of the chief of Hleidra are hammering on the round helm of his opponent. Quick as the drops of autumn rain on the falling leaves of the forest, they descend with gathering fierceness. None may long oppose the peerless son of Odin. He cleaves in two the head of the daring

chief of the Black Mountain. The affrighted horse, pierced also in the neck, drags his unconscious burthen through the thickest ranks of war. There will be darkness in the halls of Vala, and the voice of sorrow will arise from gentle lips, when the fate of the wild but generous warrior is known among his people!

Still raged the fight with varying success. The warriors of Sigurd fought with the fiery rage of the lion in his anger. Hermold of the Lake fell beneath the anlace of Hildebrand, Thoralf cut down Rohante, Oder, Helgé, and Siggeir. Like dragons, panting for slaughter, were the remaining chiefs. Terrible was the recurring onset. The axes of the leaders of the host of Sigurd crowded the plain with corses. The troops of Askew recked not of their fury, and, although inferior in numbers, stood firm as the rocks of Solundar. Eyvindr hurled the ategars of destruction; the crimson gore spread around him. Olave, with the noblest of Sigurd's men, thunders in the centre of the invading host; the standard of the "Wolf" still rises amid a very forest of spears. Uttering shrill cries, the mountain warriors plunge headlong into the reeling tide of the contest. Let us again approach, and watch more closely the issue.

The spear of Biorn is splintered. Rembert falls by the anlace of Thoralf. Sighvatr rages like an eagle in the battle, but is slain by the all-conquering sword of Askew. The pale yellow scarf of Orvar is died

with the blood of many warriors, but he sinks beneath the axe of the son of Ulfr. Soga's helm is rent asunder. The ategar of Half drops from the grasp of its dying owner. Hildebrand falls mortally wounded. His plunging steed seeks vainly to free itself from the ponderous mace still chained to the empty saddle. Now may the standard of the "Golden Dragon," waving gloriously in the wind, be seen to advance. The two-edged sword of its kingly owner still cleaves, with unshrinking might, a crimson passage through the opposing enemy,—now piercing the head or breast of an heroic and firmly-resisting opponent; and now driving its keen point through the back of a retreating one. The heaps of slain thicken with awful speed. The neighbouring Halvar runs red with the blood of the mighty fallen. The host of Biorn retreat with their leader. The troops of Oddr and Allimund desert their chiefs. The bands of Anlaf halt and throw down their arms. Still, however, does Ottar the Swarthy spread carnage through the ranks of the Dragon chief. Hallvardr of the Brown Vale cheers on his gallant men; and Thordr the lofty leads on the "Hawks of the Hill." The shadows of night draw near: the dim clouds sink to the earth. Allimund, Ottar, and Hallvardr are severally cut down by the valiant Thoralf; Anlaf falls by the trenchant weapon of the youthful, but gigantic son of Ulfr; and Askew fells to the earth the haughty leader of the "Hawks of the Hill." Alas, for Thordr the Lofty! The fairest of

women shall weep for his fall! The bowers of Lunden and the white rocks of Scania shall be dim to-morrow!

The boastful, but inglorious Sigurd now flies to his mountain-fastness. He flies—but the terrible falchion of "Arm-of-Iron" is on his track! The moon rises, with anxiously-expected beam, on the scene of retreat, enabling the victors to pursue, with dreadful certainty, their task of carnage. "Arm-of-Iron" gains on the royal fugitive; his black steed, flaked with foam, at length bears him within reach of the mean-spirited, though high-born leader; and he buries his dreadful weapon in the body of his flying adversary. Sigurd falls—the shades of death dance before his eyes! The brave, unyielding Olave shares the fate of his royal master, receiving his death from the same powerful hand. The broken forces of the enemy are now cut down, or taken captive. Not a weapon remains to bid defiance to the banner of the "Dragon!"

"Over the hawk's station, over the hawk's banquet of heads,
Over the quivering of the spears reddening was the wing.
Over the howling of the storm the course of the sea-gull was manifest.
Over the blood whirling, the blood flowing, the exulting ravens were screaming.
Over the blood gushing, over the treasure of the fierce-winged race,
Was the clamour of the apt energy, aptly spreading through the sky."

The heroes of Hleidra spread their massive shields over the helm (19) of the godlike Askew; the wreath

of conquest is placed on his head; and they sing the joyous song of victory.

The song, which follows, presents a lively specimen of the manner in which the ancients scállds of the North were wont to extemporise their rude strains. They had a habit of occasionally contributing, in succession, a strophe to each poetical offering of this nature, framing the first line in accordance with the last words of the preceding sentence, so as to preserve a closer appearance of continuous composition than would otherwise occur; while it tested the skill of the various contributors, by heightening the difficulties of the task of improvisation :—

SONG OF VICTORY.

ANGURVADEL.

Who is the dreadless chief,
Victory's son?
The ruler o'er mountain, and forest, and wave?
Lift high your bright mead-cups, your voices lift high,
Drown the trumpets' fierce notes in each heart's thrilling cry,
While the glad rocks give back the long-echoed reply—
It is Askew, the Lord of the Brave!

MIMUNGR.

The Lord of the Brave!
The Lord of the Free!
Whose footstool is conquest, whose canopy fame!
Wave high your broad shields o'er the chief of our pride,
For his path, fairest maidens, rich garlands provide;
While the minstrels' glad art, on bold melody's tide,
His glories, his triumphs proclaim!

BRYNTHVARI.

His glories, his triumphs!
His slaughters, his spoils!
How he treads on the neck of his once haughty foes!
How the castles red blaze with the light of his brand,
How the dark ships reel down, as at ocean's command,
When he stretches, in wrath, his omnipotent hand,
And deals his all-conquering blows!

NAGELLRING.

His conquering blows
Let the scállds proudly sing,
Till the icebergs roll back the fierce glee of the North!
Oh! sweet is the life of the true sons of fight,
Battle, feast, woman's smiles, spread a round of delight;
While still the glad scenes of far rapine invite,
And our barks o'er the swan's path go forth!

DRAGVENDILL.

Over the swan's path,
Over the flood!
Over the waves of the billowy deep,
Love we to ride, when around our dark track
Each storm-fiend is urging his courser black
With the snow-white mane, and through mist and through rack,
The winds of the wild North sweep!

SIGURLIOMI.

The winds of the wild North!
The winds of the Pole!
Oh, firm is the breast, by their voices unawed!
Now savagely fierce, and now mournfully mild,
Now shrill as the death-wail, when carnage is piled,
Now hoarse as the echoes that sweep o'er the wild,
When the ghosts of the slain ride abroad!

THIDREK.

The ghosts of the slain!
The heroes of old!
They that share the proud revel in Valhall's wide hall!
Oh! raise high the wassail-shout, raise high the song,
Bid the harp's thrilling tide each glad echo prolong;
While we drink to our late-fallen war-mates that throng
To that feast, at the Valkyries' call!

HRAUNGVITHR.

The Valkyries' call
To the banquet so rare,
Where the mead-cups the skulls of our foemen shall prove!
Each fair breast gushes o'er with its own snowy bliss,
Rapture dwells in each glance, sunny heaven in each kiss;
Then let fate frown to-morrow, our blest lot is this—
Still to fight, and to feast, and to love!

CHAPTER X.

HARALLD OF UPSAL'S "ANNALS OF THE EXPLOITS OF ASKEW, KING OF LETHRA."—EXTRACTS CONTINUED: KING ASKEW CONVENES HIS "THEGNS" AND FOLLOWERS FOR A DESCENT ON BRITAIN.—SPEECHES OF KING ASKEW AND THORKILL JARLL IN THE WAR COUNCIL.

Fifty and one times have I
Call'd the people to the appointed battles
By the warning spear-messenger.
Little do I believe that of men
There will be any
King more famous than ourself.
When young I grasp'd and redden'd my spear.

Quida of RAGNAR LODBROK.

HEAR ye of the deeds of the glorious King Askew, the beloved prince of the noble Gar-Danes (20): how he called together his palace band, his dear comrades in the war-field, and bid them make ready again to go, in the terror of their strength, against the hosts of their foes. And first he with his own hand unfurled and raised on high his dreaded standard called "Landeyda" (21), or the "Ravager of the Land;" and every warrior, grasping its lofty staff, swore, by the shoulder of his horse, and the edge of his sword,

to perish, if need were, in its defence. Thereafter, did he put on his splendid and invulnerable hauberk called his "War-ban," and ordered to be made ready his famous ship of strength called the "Long Serpent" (22). Then spake he, in great majesty, to his Jarlls (23) and Thegns (24), saying:—

"My dear comrades, ye who are sagest in council (25) and mightiest in war, listen to me your prince, while I discourse unto you of the great need our beloved brethren in the Isle of Bryten (26) have of our aid at this time; and I give you to know that I purpose to lead thither, in the morning twilight—at the break of day—our noblest chiefs of hosts, and our oldest and fiercest in war, to oppose the foul and accursed foe (27) in his strong-hold of Hreopandún, in Myrce (28). Wherefore, my dear friends and ministers, bring forth, on the instant, your battle-weapons and your war-weeds, your bills and mailed coats; and let us wax a mighty and kindred band against the Christian. Behold, upon the beach stands the ring-prowed ship (29), the steed of the sea-flood, shining like silver, and ready to start forth over the broad brine, over the roaring of the waters, over the great tumult of the waves (30). Bid then your war-masts shew like the forest-trees beside her, in the grey light of the dawn. Then will we let the deep sea bear us; we will give ourselves to the ocean. High over head shall float the golden ensign of our fathers, the victorious chiefs of old. The masts in our keels shall

laugh hoarsely at the rough play of the sail-yards. Over the swell of the waves, over the back of the rolling water, will we bear the terror of swords,—we, the excellent in war-onsets and grim battle—the bold in spirit—the strong-hearted and dignified in feats of arms. Soon will we return, in triumph, to the dwelling-places of our race; in the dignity of success will we return. Then shall joy ring loud in the hall—in the mighty hall, high and carved with pinnacles. And then, too, will I, your prince, distribute the bright ornaments—the rings and bracelets (31)—the ancient and sparkling treasures brought from afar. Glad shall be the feast, and the service of beer (32); there shall be the noise of the harp (33), and the clear song of the poet; and the white-armed maidens shall welcome, with blushing smiles, the gallant sailors over the sea. Sons of the battle, ye the famed for valour, hear your prince. In my youth have I done many glorious deeds; the mighty in war know the power of my struggle. I have torn the mead-thrones away from the hosts of my foes—from many tribes. Again will I bid float my battle-standard, and in my terrible armour will I meet the foe—the accursed of Odin and his children. They shall flee, as the mist before the sun in his strength; but I swear, by the thunderbolt of Thor, they shall not look on Askew and live!"

Thus having spoken, the renowned prince awaited the reply of his followers. The din of shields resounded (34), amid the roar of the gladdened war-

riors. Him the loftiest answered; Thorkill, surnamed "Arm-of-Iron," the leader of the band, and Stallere of the King, unlocked the treasure of words:—

"Most dread and beloved King, and you my noble brethren, well know I that every heart is blithe of mood that the war-game is nigh, and that, in the morning light, we shall tread the shore of the sea in our war-trappings. Over the broad waves of the flood, over the deep sea, shall our fresh-pitched barks ride with swelling sheets. We will cover the ocean-stream with our arms. The company of Jarlls shall be great, and the Lord of the Danes shall exult in the strength of his people. Behold, our war-boards, our spears, our deadly shafts, are at hand; our war-trappings and helmets are present in the hall; and our barks are prepared for the morning-tide. O prince of the bright Gar-Danes, sovereign of the Lethrans, victorious chief, protector of warriors, free lord of nations, be thou sure that, when the sun arises, he shall gaze on our yellow-rimmed shields, as we wend rejoicing over the deeps of the sea, on our path to the glories of victory. I speak as one who hath long served thee with his dear sword; we have had joy together in the slaughter; we have put to sleep the mighty and the high with our war-blades. The enemy knoweth the power of our strength—we will furiously grind him to pieces. Never saw I, throughout the earth, a mightier champion than the Dragon Chief, the Lord of Shields, the Battle-King over the Road of the Swans, the victorious

Askew, famous amongst peoples. In the name of my brother Jarlls, and the Thegns here present, I swear, unto thee, noble chief, by the war-club of Odin, that, come weal, come woe, we will, one and all, live or die with thee (35), as Fate, which goeth ever as it must, shall resolve."

CHAPTER XI.

GARALLD OF UPSAL'S "ANNALS OF THE EXPLOITS OF ASKEW, KING OF LETHRA."—EXTRACTS CONTINUED: THE DEPARTURE OF THE EXPEDITION, AND ITS ARRIVAL IN THE THAMES.—KING ASKEW, IN CONCERT WITH OTHER DANISH KINGS, THEN IN BRITAIN, INVADES MERCIA.

Then he loos'd his sea-dragon, and donn'd his bright mail,
There was snorting of billow and swelling of sail.

Frithiof's Saga.

I will bear the sword
and the ample shield,
my yellow buckler, to the battle.
I will seize the foe with my grasp,
and fearless contend
with hate against the hateful.

BEOWULF.

It is not our purpose to follow the adventurous chief from the war-council to the mead-hall, where he again harangues his followers, in the same strain of jubilant valour. The preparations for departure are, as customary with this roving people, speedily made, and their banners are unfurled to the wind.

"I have never heard
that a more king-like ship
than the Long Serpent

has been prepared,
with the weapons of Hilda,
and noble garments,
and bills and mails.
In its bosom lay
many vessels,
that with them should far depart
on the territory of the flood.
Then they fixed in it
the flowing banner,
the Ravager of the Land,
high over their heads.
They let the waters bear it,
the tide, into the ocean."

The expedition heaves anchor, and, after encountering a most furious and terrible storm, arrives in the Thames (36). The Danes winter at *Lundenceaster* (37), augmented by a wide accession of allies from the north. Burrhed, King of Mercia, and other sovereigns, are compelled to renew their league with them, by payment of heavy compositions; yet, in spite of all such treaties and negotiations, the reckless invaders, after roving about some time to the terror of the neighbouring princes, pursue their course of hostility, and, entering Mercia, establish their main force at *Heropandún*, where they destroy the royal palace and the celebrated monastery, to which was attached the sacred mausoleum of the Mercian kings (38). The following passages, from the "*Britannia Saxonica,*" refer to the sudden alarm of the Mercian people, and the unhappy situation of Burrhed, whose fears for

the safety of his person, as well as kingdom, are aroused by some intimation of the hollow nature of the compact they have formed with him (39). We may premise that the chronicle from which these curious details proceed is unusually free from the too plentiful alloy of romantic and superstitious exaggeration which, as old Fuller says "was the wild gourd that flavoured the pottage of our earlier history;" but its statements are not improbably mixed with fable,—its materials being chiefly gathered from the monkish records of the twelfth century, and from the poetic narratives of the earlier ages. The date of the compilation of the present extracts might probably be assigned to the thirteenth century, or to a later period, as Sir Ernest Oldworthy critically remarked, from sundry peculiarities in the style of their Latinity, as well as from certain anachronisms, that provided painted glass windows (40), and a ring of bells (41), for the abbey church of *Hreopandún*, in the ninth century. It will be seen that our present narrative refers the invasion of Mercia to the period of summer, instead of winter, as reported by the later writers, who seem to have understood the statement of the "Saxon Chronicle" that the Danes *wintered* at *Hreopandún*, as declaratory of the fact that they *went* thither at that period; whereas it is evident that their expedition took place in the course of the summer, and that they wintered at *Hreopandún*, according to their usual practice of re-

maining stationary during the time when the roads were obscured by the snow, and while the severity of the weather rendered the habits of the camp and the foray less inviting,—a season thus alluded to by the Northern poet,—

> "When clustering near the social blaze,
> A tale beguiled the icy days,
> Of mystic names, supernal all,
> Rife in Valhalla's beaming hall."

It is not to be supposed, however, that, though stationary, they remained inactive; their love of plunder, and the necessity of exacting their supplies from a large extent of country, for the maintenance of their vast bodies of troops, prompting sufficient employment, of a predatory nature, for the customary exercise of their roving disposition.

NOTES TO PART IV.

(1.) Hleidra, or Lethra, was the ancient metropolis of Zealand. The kings of Lethra appear to have been the most ancient and the most powerful of the sovereigns of the Danish territories. Snorre generally calls the Danish kings, kings of Hleidra. There were, however, many contemporary kings in Denmark. Sir Francis Palgrave, in his "History of the Anglo-Saxons," p. 133, has a passage wherein Lethra is incidently alluded to, and which, from the obscurity of its expression, might lead many readers to believe that this place was in Sweden. "Several years before," says he, "the sons of Regnor Lodbrok had seized upon Guthred, the son of Hardacnute, the King of Lethra, in Sweden." The construction of the sentence is grammatical enough; but the sense of it is ambiguous. I must not conceal from my readers the fact deducible from genuine history, that Gothrun was king of Lethra at the period when the King Askew of our semi-fabulous narrative is recorded to have held the sovereignty.

(2.) Sogne, situate on the western coast of Norway. The scene of the Legend of Frithiof lies chiefly near the Bay of Sogne; to which firth, as Mr. Strong remarks, in his preface to the translation of that poem, adjoined a small sovereignty bearing the same appellation, and having Syrstrond for its seat of government.

(3.) These metaphorical additions were ascribed to the most famous warriors.

"Why, O King! are you thus violent?
It will not be good to fight with the 'Wolf of the Shield.'"

(4.) The "Girder of Strength;" a belt worn by the divinity referred to, and which, forged by the armourer of the Æsir, had the magic power of increasing the strength of him around whom it was braced.

(5.) Thor, the eldest and bravest of the sons of Odin and Friga, was, after his parents, considered as the greatest god among the Saxons and Danes. To him the fifth day of the week, called by them *Thors-dæg*, or Thor's day, and by us Thursday, was consecrated. Thor is represented as sitting upon a throne, with a crown of gold on his head, adorned with a circle in front, wherein were set twelve bright burnished gold stars, and with a regal sceptre in his right hand. Thor, or Asa-thor, was the Mars, or warrior-god of the Scandinavians. He is described as the god of thunder. When he moves, the earth trembles. In battle he is always girt with a magic girdle, which, as we have seen from the preceding note, has the power of inspiring him with a divine fury, and redoubling his strength. Thor is sometimes called Aukis-tor, or "Thor of the Car," from his riding on a chariot, drawn by two powerful he-goats, named Sangniostr and Tangrisner. This deity has a spouse named Sipia, famous for her beautiful hair. He had statues and temples erected to him everywhere. Bread and meat were supplied daily to the god by his worshippers, and, at stated times, libations were poured out in his honor. See *Notes to Part* 8, *No.* 5. (Vol. 3.)

(6.) Soldiers selected for eminent valour to form the body-guard of a Danish prince.

(7.) Odin, or Woden, was the supreme divinity of the Northern nations. His idol represents him in a bold and martial attitude, clad in armour, with a broad-sword uplifted, in his right hand. The name of the fourth day of the week, called by the Saxons Wodnes-dæg, or Woden's day, and by us Wednesday, is derived from this personage, whose exploits form the greatest part of the mythological creed of the Scandinavians. He is supposed to have emigrated from the East, but from what country, or at what time,

is not known. He appears, like the Hellenic Jupiter, to have been a distinguished chief and warrior in early times. Although it is asserted by some that a divinity of the name of Odin was worshipped from the most remote ages, there is reason to believe that the worship of this personage, in the north at least, had its real origin a few centuries before the commencement of the Christian era, when a powerful chieftain of the name was driven by the Romans from his dominions between the Euxine and Caspian, and took refuge in Scandinavia, the whole of which he subjected to his sway. In the course of time, however, this distinction was entirely lost, and the persons and acts of the divine and earthly Odin became inextricably blended in the mythology and traditions of the North. Human sacrifices were offered to Odin, as to the other chief deities. On ordinary occasions, the victims were quadrupeds.

(8.) "Saxo-Grammaticus, lib. 10, *Dav. Hist.* hath a story of a bear that loved a woman, kept her in his den a long time, and begot a son of her, out of whose loyns proceeded many northern kings ; this is the originall, belike, of that common tale of Valentine and Orson : Ælian, Pliny, Peter Gellius are full of such relations."—BURTON'S *Anatomy of Melancholy*, vol. 2, p. 195. This story suggested the idea of Odin's becoming the father of Askew under the likeness of a dragon ; an incident which the classical fables of Jupiter and Leda, Neptune and Ceres, rendered of sufficient currency in the devices of mythic fiction. Indeed, the very same sort of incident is recorded by the ancient poets, with respect to Jupiter, who in the shape of a Dragon insinuated himself into the embraces of Proserpine.

(9.) The practice of resorting to supernatural means for the purpose of rendering the weapons of a warrior more dangerously offensive to his enemies, seems, to our more enlightened notions of what constitutes true valour, to detract from the bravery and skill of the individual who would thus depend on other resources than his own, for the destruction of an adversary. But we should recollect that the tradition which asserts this use of magical aid

on the part of great heroes, likewise instances the habitual recourse to spells and incantations by their enemies; and, therefore, if we admit the fact that such powers were employed by others, we must confess how unequal would be the greatest courage and natural skill in opposing the effect of these hostile charms. We find that Odin himself disclosed to the Æsir the mysteries of magic, conveying his instructions in Runic measures, which formed the various kinds of spells. A knowledge of this hidden lore formed a part of the education of an aspiring and heroic prince, as we are informed by the ancient poem of "Rig's-mál:"—

"Enn konr ungr
kunni runar
œfin runar
oc alldr runar
meir kunni hann
mönnum biarga
eggiar deyfa
elldi at lægià."

"The Runic characters," observes Mallet, "were distinguished into various kinds. The *noxious*, or, as they called them, the *bitter runes*, were employed to bring various evils on their enemies: the *favourable* averted misfortunes: the *victorious* procured conquest to those who used them: the *medicinal* were inscribed on the leaves of trees for healing: others served to dispel melancholy thoughts; to prevent shipwreck; were antidotes against poison; preservatives against the resentment of their enemies," &c.

(10.) The race of deities inhabited Asgard, a place supposed by some to have been the city in Asia, whence the real or mortal Odin was expatriated. The fabulous Asgard was pictured as containing numerous palaces and halls, the largest of which was the "Mansion of Joy," where Odin sat upon his throne amid his divine family. This throne was named *Lidskialfa*, or the "Terror of Nations," and from it he could overlook the whole earth. Two ravens, Hugin ("Spirit") and Muninn ("Memory,") sat always at his ear, and communicated to him intelligence of all things that

were going on in the universe. The inhabitants of the earth, or mankind, were created by Odin and his brothers. Two pieces of wood, the one of ash and the other of elm, formed the materials of the first pair of mortals, who were distinguished for personal beauty and intellectual ability. Odin had two brothers, Vile and Ve. They were descended from Bure, a being of nobler nature than the race of evil spirits that inhabited chaos. This chaos was a mass of confused vapours, peopled by a race of *Rimthursar*, or evil spirits of gigantic bulk. These Odin and his brothers overcame, with their great chief Ymer, of whose body he created the world. His flesh became the mould, his bones the rocks, his hair the vegetable tribes, his blood the ocean, and his skull the heavens, at the four corners of which were placed certain dwarfs, called North, South, East, and West, whose duty it was to sustain the celestial dome. After this, the luminaries of the sky were set in their places, and the order of the seasons appointed. Natt ("Night") wedded one of the *Aser*, or celestial family of Odin, and gave birth to Dag ("Day.") These deities travel alternately round the world in cars, drawn by single horses. Every great body, as in the Grecian mythology, was represented by a divinity. The Greeks believed that the universe was originally a chaos. Jupiter and his brothers followed exactly the same course with the Titans, or older and gigantic deities of Greece, as was pursued by the Northern divinities against those of their mythology.

(11.) This was a favourite pledge of union among the chieftains of the North.

(12.) At the court of Harold Harfager, the Scállds sat on the high-seat close to the monarch, and were held in greater estimation than any of his nobles.—GEJER, i., 206. And so should it be in our own times. The nobility of nature, created by the *fiat* of the King of kings, are entitled to a measureless precedence and superiority over the mere parchment aristocracy of an earthly potentate. How paltry must appear the patent of a being of our own race, the record of whose noblest grant of privileges or distinctions consists of so many lines inscribed with the gall of an

ox and the quill of a goose, on the skin of a sheep, when compared with the warrant of Him whose edicts are inscribed with His own almighty hand on the living tablet of the ennobled soul! No star that decks the breast of human greatness can vie with that whose rays are enkindled from within. The rest are mere embroidery or tinsel, viewed otherwise than as visual indications, or emblems, of this inner worth. The star of the soul should alone inspire our deeper reverence; it is a piece of Heaven's own embroidery, and the lustre of its rays is eternal!

(13.) The nightingale of the North.

(14.) A dudgeon, a half dagger. In the glossary of archaic words accompanying Chatterton's Works, it is described as "an ancient sword." I have ventured to use it in this latter sense.

(15.) Hyena.

(16.) The "Dragon" was a frequent surname of heroes, whose exploits had rendered them terrible to their foes. Maglocune, a British king, who was a great warrior, and of a remarkable stature, was called the "Dragon of the Isle," perhaps having his seat in Anglesey.

(17.) This title was borne by Baldwin, Count of Flanders, who carried off, with friendly violence, Judith, the widow of Ethelwulf, and of Alfred's brother, Ethelbald. A similar appellation ("Steel-Arms") was given to Peredur, one of the attendant knights of King Arthur. I may also instance Edmund "Ironside," the eldest son and successor of Ethelred the second.

(18.) The capital of Sogne.

(19.) A customary token of triumph among the nations of the North.

(20.) Thorkelin calls these the Northern Danes, inhabiting

Zealand and the other isles.—Poem of "Beowulf," p. 261. I incline to refer the derivation of Gar to the weapon so named, (a javelin,) and from which the Germans are said to receive their designation. It may, however, proceed from the word gara, an angular point of land, or promontory. Mr. Sharon Turner considers that the term implies ancient, but omits to state the word affording ground for his conjecture, a deficiency which the "Anglo-Saxon Dictionary" does not seem to remedy, although he says, "I would rather deduce it from the Saxon." I agree with him that Thorkelin's derivation of Gar from Aur, a peninsula in Iceland, is unsatisfactory. As the Saxons extended their depredations to the coast of Denmark, there appears considerable ground for believing that they might have colonized some portion of it, establishing themselves under this name.

(21.) The royal standard of Harald Hardráde of Norway, who invaded England in the reign of Harold, was thus designated. The word landeyda being of Norse, or Old Danish, derivation, was equally in use amongst the various nations inhabiting the North.

(22.) This was the name of the gallant ship of Olaf Tryggvason, King of Norway, who perished in a naval fight with the kings of Denmark and Sweden, anno 1000. It seems that the idea was derived from the fanciful image of a dragon or serpent with wings, for we often find ships compared to these fabulous monsters:—

"A serpent with chains,
Towering and plundering,
With armed wings."

(23.) The jarl of the Northmen was a title of similar distinction to that of eorl among the Anglo-Saxons. The eorl is a dignity recognized in our earliest laws. He was a nobleman of the highest rank, differing in some respects now imperfectly known, from the ealdorman, who was the most eminent officer in the kingdom. In the latter part of the Anglo-Saxon period, the

title ealdorman seems to have been superseded by that of eorl. It may be noticed here that the word jarl is pronounced yarl.

(24) The nobles were called thanes, and were of two kinds, the greater and the lesser thanes. The latter seem to have had some dependence on the former, as the former had on the king.

(25.) Those who had a right to appear in the national council, were the chiefs, the priests, and the warriors; and no person was considered to belong to the class of warriors till he had been formally invested with a buckler and lance, not only with the consent of the council, but in their presence.

(26.) Britain.

(27.) The cruelties exercised by Charlemagne against the Pagan Saxons in Nordalbinia, had roused the resentment of their neighbours and fellow-worshippers of Odin in Jutland and the isles of the Danish archipelago. Their wild spirit of adventure and lust of plunder was now wrought up to a pitch of frenzy by religious fanaticism. Hence the ravages of the Northmen were directed with peculiar fury against the monasteries and churches in France and England, and against the priests of a religion rendered doubly hateful to them in consequence of the attempts made by the successors of Charlemagne in the empire, to force it upon them as a badge of national slavery. The Danish and Norwegian kings and jarls, who yielded to these attempts, and complied with the wishes of the emperors by embracing Christianity, rendered themselves unpopular with their countrymen, whilst those who clung to the ancient faith of their fathers, and even persecuted the votaries of the new religion, were honoured and beloved as patriots and heroes. From this period the great struggle between the North and the South assumed the character of a religious as well as national war.—WHEATON'S *History of the Northmen*, p. 146.

(28.) Mercia.

(29.) The vessels of the Danes were navigated with two sails

and with oars, and would accommodate about one hundred men, with all the provisions necessary for a cruise. The vast forests with which their country abounded, furnished them with sufficient quantities of timber for building them.

(30.) The metaphor and the periphrasis abound in the discourse and literary compositions of these times. "The imagination exerted itself in framing those abrupt and imperfect hints or fragments of similes, which we call metaphors, and the feeling expressed its emotions by that redundant repetition of phrases, which, though it added little to the poet's lay, was yet the emphatic effusion of his heart; and excited consenting sympathies in those to whom it was addressed. This habit of paraphrasing the sentiment is the great peculiarity of the mind of the Anglo-Saxon poetry; the metaphor may be frequently observed, but the periphrasis is never long absent."—TURNER's *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, vol. iii. b. 9, c. 1, p. 258—9.

(31.) The bracelet was an appendage of great esteem amongst the Danes, and appears to have constituted also a symbol of religious import, to which they appealed in confirmation of an oath. "In the Sögur," observes Mr. Strong, in the Notes to his Translation of "Frithiof's Saga," "bracelets assume an adventitious and even mystic importance; they become amulets and talismans, emblems of the circle of the world, or periphery of the universe." He also well remarks, that "where property is insecure, any mode of rendering it portable would easily recommend itself; and to this may possibly be imputed the hereditary propensity of the Icelanders [as of the Danes] to accumulate ornaments upon the person." Mr. Strong might have told us that a few links of a gold or silver neck-chain were often accepted as the substitute for coin in those days of irregular commercial usage. The gift of a bracelet, as a mark of royal favour, may be assimilated to the chivalric decoration conferred in later times.

(32.) Ale, or beer, was the general drink of the Danes. Pliny, alluding to the use of this liquor in the west of Europe, says,—

"All these nations have a liquor with which they intoxicate themselves, made of corn and water. So exquisite is the cunning of mankind in gratifying their various appetites, that they have thus invented a method to make water itself intoxicate."

(33.) This instrument is said to have been invented by the Scythians, and was much used by all the Gothic nations. They seem to have delighted chiefly in the lyre or harp. They sang and played by the ear, and their tunes, as well as their poems, were handed down from one age to another.

(34.) This was a customary method of testifying applause.

(35.) To die for the honour of their band was the height of their ambition: to survive its disgrace, or the death of their leader, was thought infamous.—LYTTLETON.

(36.) A. D. 872.

(37.) London.

(38.) Mr. Turner gives the following notice of these events. "The invaders marched immediately, even those who were in Northumberland, to London, and wintering there, threatened Mercia. Burrhed, its king, twice negotiated with them; but, at last, disregarding all treaties, they entered Mercia, and wintered at Repton, in Derbyshire, where they destroyed the celebrated monastery, the sacred mausoleum of all the Mercian kings."—(Monasteriumque celeberrimum omnium regum Merciorum sacratissimum mausoleum funditus destruxissent.—INGULF, 26.)

(39.) Rapin tells us that Burrhed was apprized at this period of the determination of the enemy to effect his personal destruction, as well as the overthrow of his kingdom.

(40.) That the abbey of *Hreopqndún* even possessed windows of glass is doubtful, although edifices of that date were so distin-

guished in very rare instances. The venerable Bede informs us that the Abbot Benedict, about the year 674, first brought over from Italy artificers skilled in making of glass, for the purpose of glazing the church and monastery of Weremouth. The art of painting on glass is supposed to have been introduced into England in the reign of John. By some writers, however, it is asserted that the Anglo-Saxons were well skilled in it, and that specimens of their performance still remain.

(41.) Turkitul, who, from Chancellor to King Athelstan, chose to become abbot of Croyland, and repaired and much enriched the monastery after it had been ruined by the Danes, was the first that, by adding to the two great bells of that abbey six more, made the first tunable ring of bells in England. He died in 973. Under this note I may observe that there is ample testimony to shew that, long after the reign of Alfred, nearly the whole of the houses throughout England, and the chief part of the monasteries, churches, and other public buildings, were of the meanest construction, consisting of wood, and roofed with thatch. "The Anglo-Saxon nobility," remarks a late writer, "had no taste for magnificent buildings; but spent their great revenues in mean, low, and inconvenient houses. This seems to have been owing in great measure to the unsettled state of their country, and the frequent depredations of the Danes, who made it a constant rule to burn all the houses, monasteries, and churches, wherever they came. From the few remains of Anglo-Saxon architecture in England, it appears to have been a rude imitation of the ancient Roman manner, and very different from that which is commonly called Gothic, of which so many noble specimens adorn our country. The most admired of the Saxon churches seem to have been low and gloomy, their pillars plain and clumsy, their walls immoderately thick, their windows few and small, with semicircular arches at the top."

PART V.

KING ASKEW IN BRITAIN; OR, THE DANISH INVASION OF MERCIA.

A CONTINUATION OF THE PRECEDING NARRATIVE.

The furious victor's partial will prevailed,
All prostrate lay ; and, in the secret shade,
Deep stung but fearful Indignation gnashed
His teeth.

THOMSON.

The war-whoop echoes still our island round,
And, as the surge encroaching on the land
Gives note of mischief by terrific sound,
Like wave on wave, the robbers crowd to land.
The Danes ! the Danes ! the young and aged cry,
And mothers press their infants as they fly.

DIBDIN.

CHAPTER XII.

"SAXON BRITAIN."—EXTRACTS: RUMOUR OF AN INVASION BY THE DANES.—KING BURRHED'S FEARS FOR THE SAFETY OF HIS PERSON AND KINGDOM.—THE EXPECTED APPROACH OF THE DANES, AND TERROR OF THE INHABITANTS OF HREOPANDÚN (REPTON) THE CAPITAL OF MERCIA.—CONCEALMENT OF THE TREASURE OF THE PALACE AND MONASTERY.

Oh, they are villains, every Dane of them,
Practised to stab and smile, to stab the babe
That smiles upon them.

BROOKE.

MACB. The cry is still, *They come!*

Macbeth, Act v. sc. 5.

It was evening—the sun yet majestically rode aloft in the cloudless heavens, seeming to stay his reluctant course to the expecting west, as if he gazed with more than wonted delight on the beauteous scenes of Albion, now garbed in all the profuse luxuriance of the early summer. Nor might nature present a spot of more happy and peaceful aspect, of more fertile and blooming freshness, than that which claims our present notice—the ancient city or burh of Hreopandún, looking down upon its rich lowland meadows, from two gently-ascending hills crested with noble for-

tresses; its scattered houses partially meeting in the valley beneath, where the royal palace and its stately abbey spread far along the river-side their gardens and park-like grounds; while their pinnacled towers and cloistered courts, environed with spacious woods, yielded an air of crowning magnificence to the varied picture. Every object breathed tranquillity and repose. A sabbath-like stillness prevailed, save when, from some vine-encircled cot, or elmy grange, the sound of quiet song, or rustic instrument, wafted a seeming welcome to the passing traveller. Now and then, likewise, the sparkling passage of a gilded chariot, or mounted warrior, through the verdantly-embowered streets, or main public square, attested the near residence of the monarch and his nobles, and gave for a moment a more city-like character to the tranquil scene.

In a solitary mansion on the borders of the river, at some distance from the Roman citadel, and to the west of the city, was the honoured abode of the wealthy and powerful Earl, Eadúlf; who, on the day treated of in our narrative, had bestowed one of his two daughters in marriage on the Count Adriano Gradinego, a Roman noble, visiting Hreopandún on a secret embassy from Pope John VIII. Far had the reputation of the maiden's beauty accompanied the warlike fame of her gallant, but now aged sire; and a gay and happy throng of varied revellers, numbering amongst them the noblest of the land, were assembled

to do honour to the festive occasion. The harp of the minstrel poured forth its most joyous strains from bower and grotto, from gilded hall and rustic pavilion; and the guests had dispersed themselves in groups, or pairs, along the banks of the breezy river, or beneath the shade of the old magnificent trees that dotted and skirted the Earl's beloved retreat. The united lovers had taken the first happy occasion of being for a few moments apart from their flattering visitors; and the Count was pouring into the ear of the lovely Elgiva, those heart-uttered and tenderly-broken ejaculations of indescribable transport due to the accomplishment of his proudest wish—the possession of her who, in his bosom's shrine, was as the presiding deity of his earthly devotion. Her blushing cheek from time to time reflected the impassioned glow of his whispered admiration; her small white hand, locked in the trembling grasp of his own, timidly, yet fondly, replied to his fervid pressure; and if, in the intervals of their soft discourse, their lips found a sweet solace in each other's caressing touch, who shall draw aside, save with a feeling of reverence and sympathy, the leafy screen that enshadowed those moments of exquisite delight!

"Beautiful Elgiva!" he exclaimed, while his proud arm encircled all that was felt worthy of inspiring a wish to live, "how passionately have I longed for this happy hour, when I could at length press you to my beating heart, and say that you were indeed mine!"

And he drew more closely to his own gallant form the slender and coyly-yielded waist of his beautiful bride, imprinting a lengthened and impassioned kiss on her glowing cheek. "Oh! happiness almost too great!" he continued, "too intensely delightful to be borne! Ah, that tear of sweet emotion, which reflects and multiplies my own sensations of rapture! Let me kiss it, dearest, while yet it lingers on the silken fringe of that delicate lid!—My own, my dearest Elgiva, speak to me,—tell me (though, oh, how needless the assurance!) that you share in my yearning transport—in my sense of deep, intoxicating felicity! That glance—that blush—that slight but thrilling pressure of your beloved hand, says more than words could speak! Oh, let me again and again press you to my heart! Let me again, and yet a thousand times, call you my beautiful, my dearest! Oh, too happy Adriano!—But hark!—an envious footstep approaches to reclaim an union with our guests. One more rapturous kiss of that exquisite cheek—those melting lips—this snowy hand—this matchless hand, whose radiant beauties are for ever consecrated to my adoring homage by the sweet pledge of the nuptial ring—one more look of unspeakable, holiest transport, and we will again join the festive circle. To-morrow, loveliest! shall see us far away over yon blue hills, seeking the welcome bark that shall bear us to that distant land, where the ancient towers of my fathers are reflected in the yellow Tiber; while their garlanded vineyards and terraced

gardens, their rich pine-woods and orange-groves stretching beneath a sunnier sky than that of Albion make glad the hills and vales that love to look upon its storied waves!—Soh, Pedrillo,"—(Here the Count's page interrupted them,)—"what intelligence? You seem hurried and excited," he remarked, in an under tone, "and your cheek is pale, as with some tidings of woe or terror!"

"Alas! my honoured master," replied the youth, in an agitated whisper, "give me your private ear for one sad moment." Then, motioning the Count aside, he added,—"My gracious Lord, the Danes are said to be approaching the city in overwhelming numbers, and with furious design to destroy it utterly. They have put to sack and slaughter every town and castle in their line of march, burning, pillaging, and destroying the monasteries and churches, and the houses of the nobles. Just now two horsemen, with breathless speed, arrived from the palace, to summon the Earl and his chief guests to attend the Witan, which is about to be held; and I flew hither to acquaint you that the Earl is enquiring eagerly for the Lady Elgiva and yourself, in hopes of being the first to break to you the painful tidings."

A loud cry of—"The Danes are coming! Fly—fly!" arose at the next instant from a near party of the late pleasure-seekers, and reached the terrified ear of Elgiva, who, hastily quitting her seat, and actuated by the prevailing sense of immediate danger, threw

herself into the now sad embrace of her beloved Adriano, who thus, in one unexpected moment, saw himself bereaved of all his fond anticipations of the approaching consummation of his happiness; while images of danger and suffering crowded upon his despairing fancy, rendered still more terrible by the insupportable reflection that she who was his soul's worship—the idol of his doting heart—the only possession for which he valued being, lay probably at the merciless disposal of the savage and heathen conqueror! Oh, thought too dreadful for utterance—even too awful for idea! His late visions of rapturous enjoyment served to render yet more dark and desolate the expectations of the following moments.

After still more tenderly embracing his unhappy bride, placing her hand in his bosom, and again and again pouring forth words of consolation and encouragement, he supported her almost fainting frame towards the house, where all was now confusion and dismay. The sounds of the cheerful harp were exchanged for the ringing of war-accoutrements, as troopers and armed domestics, mounting in hot haste, thronged around, for the purpose of forming a convoy, to conduct the Lady Elgiva, by her father's command, to a place of greater safety. A few brief moments sufficed to allow of the parting embraces of the afflicted father and his sorrowing child. The valiant Earl, summoned to the councils of his sovereign, had only time to give his blessing to the youthful pair,

and place in the hands of the Count a hurried letter addressed to the superior of the neighbouring nunnery at Hanbyrig, who was his relation; and desiring that she would receive Elgiva as an inmate, until future circumstances should enable her to quit England with her husband. The Count then, with soldierlike expedition, attired himself in a suit of noble armour, the gift of his thrice-sacred sovereign, the Roman Pontiff; and having also hastened the farewell arrangements of the party, he placed his now weeping wife in the horse-litter prepared for her conveyance, and dividing the guards into four several bodies, so as to surround the precious object of his charge, he continued to ride beside her, endeavouring to soothe her despondency by hopeful presages. Arrived at the convent after a few 'hours' ride, the Count, with an aching yet more satisfied heart, deposited his all of earthly happiness under the strongly-recommended care of the venerable superior, and, after a prolonged and painfully-repeated series of farewells, tore himself away, and hurried back to Hreopandún, unaccompanied by the escort, which he stationed near the convent, where his dearest anxieties so deeply centered. It was midnight ere he regained the city, and the horrors of slaughter and violation, of incendiary destruction and reckless spoliation, were raging around. But the adventures which he met with, in the midst of the scenes of terror that awaited him, must incidentally appear in the now altered course of our narrative, which goes

back from this point to the earlier hour of vespers, introducing to the reader the situation and anxiety of the Mercian monarch, ere yet fully apprised of the immediate danger that threatened his kingdom.

We may here remark that during the three years preceding the date of this part of our relation, one misfortune had followed close upon another, in the progress of public affairs. The Danes had laid waste the eastern districts of Mercia, and the sovereigns of Wales had made hostile encroachments on the western portion of the realm. Burrhed had raised a considerable army to repress these incursions; a step which necessarily entailed vast additional burthens on his impoverished and unhappy people. The isle of Ely was subjected to a heavy contribution, notwithstanding that it had been recently desolated by the heathen invader; and the king found it needful also to seize on the lands of the abbeys and other religious foundations, or to quarter large bodies of his soldiers upon them. He took into his own possession Stamford, Huntingdon, Wisbeach, and other places, belonging to the monastic body, who, with an indiscreet avarice, contended that the defence of the country had no claim for support on their extensive estates and revenues, which had been specially exempted by Royal charters from all demands for the maintenance of the princes' wars. Croyland and Bardney more particularly felt the weight of the King's exactions; and, although the abbot of the former denounced the sove-

reign's acts as sacrilegious, and predicted, to the terror of the troops, who were largely imbued with the superstition of the times, that his early and entire overthrow would be the result of so daring an impiety, he still persisted in quartering his army on the lands of the church, and gave some of the more distant possessions which it held, to the most warlike retainers of his military court. To add to the King's growing embarrassments, internal divisions, spreading through every class of the state, continually distracted his attention from the outward defence of the nation. The royal finances were diminished, in spite of the alienations, from day to day, of ecclesiastical property; the attacks on opposite frontiers necessitated a wide division of his troops: the misery of his people, exposed to the hostile incursions of the twofold enemy, became insupportable; complaints multiplied from one hour to another; and now the sudden and entirely-unforeseen invasion of an overwhelming body of the Danish forces was calculated to put the finishing stroke to the period of the Mercian rule. We have but to add, by way of introduction to the succeeding part of our narrative, that Hreopandún, which furnished a sort of retirement to the sovereign, rather than constituted the customary residence of his court, still enjoyed a full share of prosperity—its abbesses receiving large benefactions from the royal coffers out of the sums from time to time exacted from the other monasteries; and its citizens deriving an increased

protection and patronage from the vicinity of the monarch, and many of his chief nobility. While the King resided at Hreopandún, his courts were usually held at Tamaweorthig, now called Tamworth. A desire to secure the person of the Mercian monarch, who had, for two-and-twenty years, been an active and powerful opponent; as well as to destroy the far-famed and richly-endowed monastery, was the twofold object of the Danes in directing the main strength of their army against the city of Hreopandún, at the period to which we now conduct our readers' attention.

Bright were the pleasant fields in the freshness of early June, and variegated with countless flowers of fair and sunny gold. The hedge-rows encircling the meadows, beneath the royal house of Hreopandún, were widely decked with the silvery radiance of the hawthorn; and the dappled and snow-white herds ranged happily amid the rich and plenteous pastures. Lofty apple-trees, clothed with the wild vine(1), that hung, in playful festoons, from branch to branch, gave a bowery aspect to the beautiful inclosures. The light-winged bees poured their dancing crowds over the open tract beyond; "now lying in the honey-bearing leaves of the marigolds, or in the purple flowers of the mallows, they sucked the nectar, drop by drop; now flying round the yellowing willows and purplish tops of the broom, they carried the plunder from which they make their waxen castles; now crowding about the round berries of the ivy, and the

light springs of the flourishing linden tree, they constructed their honey-combs." From every single bush was sent forth the gleeful carol of the smaller birds, and from every woodland nook resounded the answering strains of the mavis or the ousel; while the lark carried the sweet melody of earth to the glowing portals of heaven. The woodpecker, opening and closing its wings at every stroke, rose or fell in rapid curves, as it darted from thicket to grove; and the wood-pigeon clashed its wings over its back, as it pressed its rapid flight over the varied expanse of cornland and meadow, wood and fell. The lulling murmur of the rook, and the plaintive coo of the turtle-dove, descended from the ancient elms and limes, which extended, with pleasing effect, along the banks of the river, immediately opposite the royal abode. Softly and silently did the gentle Trenta pour his eddying tide along the beauteous course that expected his smiling waters,—seeming, as he glided through that loveliest valley, to delay his departure from the verdant bowers and majestic battlements which were mirrored on his placid bosom.

"Mid flowery banks the waters glide,
Where the glad fishermen their nets extend."

Sumptuously attired in a robe of delicate purple, having the figures of peacocks, within black circles, worked in the pattern, King Burrhed gazed from one of his palace-windows upon the tranquil scene, so rich

in pastoral simplicity and natural elegance. A pensive tear stole down his manly cheek, as he asked his heart the bitter question,—"Why was I created a king, that nought but care should overshadow the light of my thoughts — forbidding me to feel the repose and pleasure which all things else enjoy!"

A magnificent swan sailed, with exulting port, along the transparent stream that reflected the monarch's far-extending towers. Watching its graceful pride, with a thoughtful air, he involuntarily exclaimed, "Free and happy bird! why am I forbidden to range, like thee, the blissful solitudes of nature, intent but to share the peaceful delights so lavishly ordained for all her creatures! Why am I doomed to drag on a weary existence, apart from her joyous communion, and to languish beneath the toils, restraints, and disquieting solicitude of kingly authority!"

He wiped away the unbidden tear, as he turned from the too beauteous prospect, and, taking up the Liturgy, which abounded with passages of holy writ, essayed to read a portion of its sacred contents. But the attempt was vain, and, uttering a few earnest exclamations of prayer, he closed the volume, and reverently kissed it, ere he laid it down. The vesper-chimes now broke on the stillness of the hour; and the unhappy king, deriving a momentary consolation from their soothing echoes, caught up his plumed hat, enriched with costly jewels from the slab of ivory

and orichalcus, whereon it reposed, and quitted the apartment, proceeding, by a private and less circuitous course, to the gardens of the palace, which extended in the direction of the abbey-church. The faltering step of the once renowned warrior betrayed the deep ravages which a long and boisterous struggle with a ferocious enemy, and with a subtle and treacherous faction, almost equally formidable, had made on a constitution originally noted for its extreme powers of activity and endurance. His cheek, habitually pallid, was now flushed with a feverish glow; and a temporary fire lighted up the depths of his eloquent and majestic eye. His imagination reverted to those happier days when Victory had sat on his helm, and the splendours of a prosperous estate had communicated happiness to his subjects. But, still and anon, came back upon his mind, with added bitterness, the tormenting reflection, that he no longer grasped, with a victor's power, the truncheon which he had so successfully wielded. The terrible certainty that impending ruin would soon bury all his cherished hopes for the future welfare of his family and people, hung over his agitated spirits, and evoked a thousand hideous phantoms of despair. He now entered the gardens, and as he viewed their more retired solitudes, whither he had so often withdrawn for the solace of meditation, in those brief intervals that saw him disengaged from the turmoil of public affairs, the painful impression arose that he now pro-

bably, for the last time, explored their grateful intricacies—doomed, alas, to know no longer a respite from the pressing cares of his station, save in the friendly arms of eternal rest!

But, by degrees, the heavy gloom which oppressed him, wore away. His step regained something of its former firmness, and he hastened onwards in the direction of the abbey-church. The balmy fragrance of the springtide air—the serene lustre of the evening sky—and the sweetly-solemn notes of the consecrated peal, calling to the exercise of our pure and revered religion, restored the aged and desponding sufferer to a calmer resignation. His soul found vent in the inspired language of heart-addressed prayer:—

"O Lord beloved!
O God our judge!
hear me:
Everlasting Ruler!
I know that my soul
with sins is wounded.
Heal thou it,
O Lord of Heaven!
And restore thou it,
O Governor of life!
O Sovereign of radiance!
Creator of man!
benign be thy mind
to me for good.
Give me thy pardon,
and thy pity.
O Light of light!
O joy of life
grant it to me.

Blessed King of Glory!
Chief of Victory!
How glorious thou art,
mighty and strong in power!
King of all kings!
The living Christ!
Creator of all the worlds!
Ruler of Angels,
Noblest of all nobility,
Saviour Lord!
Thy power is so great,
Mighty Lord!
so that none truly know it.
nor the exaltation
of the state of the angels
of the King of heaven.
I confess thee,
Almighty God!
I believe on thee,
beloved Saviour!
that thou art
the great one,
and the strong in power,
and the condescending
of all gods,
and the Eternal King
of all creatures;
and I am
one of little worth,
and a depraved man,
who is sinning here
very nearly
day and night.
I do as I would not;
sometimes in actions,
sometimes in words,
sometimes in thought,

very guilty
in conscious wickedness
oft and repeatedly.
But I beseech thee now,
Lord of heaven!
and pray to thee,
best of human-born,
that thou pity me,
Mighty Lord;
High King of heaven!
and the Holy Spirit;
and aid me
Father Almighty!
that I thy will
may perform,
before from this frail life
I depart.
Refuse me not,
Lord of Glory!
But grant me,
blessed, illustrious King!
grant me the victory
over all my enemies,
and finally
permit me, with angels,
up to ascend
to sit in the sky;
and praise the God of heaven
with the tongue of the holy,
world without end,
Amen" (2).

His thoughts, relieved from their shadowy weight, soared exultingly to that beatific region where the soul of the penitent, ransomed by the blood of the Just, and purged from all earthly alloy of sin and evil,

shall revel in eternal and unspeakable joy. He beheld in the fervour of his devotional excitement, the glorious Mary, mother and virgin, watching over the slumbers of her divine infant; while the happy Saint Joseph gazed with reverent and affectionate tenderness on the calm and graceful beauty of their hallowed charge, and the Holy Spirit, in the likeness of a snow-white dove, hovered above them. His feelings were borne, as on the wings of that blessed dove, to the sacred and most lovely tabernacles, the fair and lustrous mansions of the Most High. And it came to pass that, while his imagination thus sweetly wandered amidst the sovereign delights of that radiant paradise, picturing to itself the groups of angels, cherubim, and seraphim, that throng its ethereal depths, the great eastern window of the abbey-church suddenly gave forth its brilliant hues, as a flood of light pervading the hallowed structure, gave token that the service was about to commence. On its vast and gorgeous expanse were represented the very objects whose contemplation had engrossed his mind. In the midst, encircled with flood-like rays of glory, stood, in her serene loveliness, the Virgin Mother, embracing the smiling and God-born child. Above were hosts of angels seated amidst resplendent clouds, and celebrating, on golden harps, the greatness of the Eternal Father; while troops of apostles, prophets, martyrs, confessors, virgins, and holy matrons, were gathered together, in harmonious assemblage, in the

blissful heights beyond them. On either hand of the sainted Mary, crowned and surrounded with glory, were revealed, in prominent dignity, the figures of SS. Augustine and Guthlac, respectively accompanied by their well-known emblems—the "flaming heart transpierced," and the "whip and knife." In the illusion of the moment it seemed like a revelation of celestial favour, assuring him that his prayers were accepted, and that the shield "of Him who judgeth the nations," should be with him "in the hour of need." The consolation thus poured on his wounded spirit was increased by the sublime and soul-inspiring strains of the opening service (3); and when, after the *Pater Noster* and the *Ave Maria* were ended, his listening ear caught the expected invocation of the Psalmist,—"Incline unto my aid, O God!" he cried aloud, in the language of his heart, as well as in that of the response,—"O Lord, make haste to help me!" The swelling notes of the choir then gave forth, with impressive solemnity, the *Gloria Patri*, and the impassioned and exulting *Alleluia* chorus followed. He could no longer resist a desire to enter the holy edifice; and, withdrawing a master-key, he applied it to the yielding door which communicated with the abbey-gardens, and passing into the latter, approached the church by the abbess's private portal. As he entered the sacred building, the loud voice of Æthelheard, the officiant, pronounced the third verse of the commencing psalm,—"The Lord will send forth the sceptre of thy

power out of Sion—rule thou in the midst of thy enemies!" The striking application of this and of some of the following passages, to his own state of entire dependence on divine aid for the preservation of his kingdom, seemed to carry with it the direct and manifest assurance of protection from the Most Mighty,—"The Lord at thy right-hand hath broken kings in the day of his wrath,—He shall judge among nations!"

But, alas! for human hopes and earthly destinies! It happened that while the anthem for the *Magnificat* resounded through the spacious isles, a sudden trampling of horses shook the adjacent courts and cloisters, and the shrill notes of a forest-horn broke in upon the serenely melting cadence of the choir. Soon was the fatal truth made known. The Danes were at hand, spreading death and desolation in their terrible path! Such was the appalling intelligence borne by the Hold (4) of Tueverde's (5), and the Heretoch (6) of Northweorthig's (7) messengers, in a few hurried lines to Ruold, the Gerefa (8) of the city, and to Aldhelm, the Stallere (9) of the King. The first missive, occupying a long, narrow scroll of parchment, inclosed in a tin case, bore the following inscripsit:—

"Hold Leofenoth to Ruold, Gerefa of Hreopandún.

"Leofenoth, Hold, wisheth greeting to Ruold, Gerefa, his beloved and friend-like, and thee to know I wish (10), that our salvage foemen, the Danes, with force stupend and prodigious (some men count, with

thousands half a score, and yet three thousands more!), be speedily and with hot foot marching against Hreopandún; as Wahrmund, my mass-priest, and Elfwig, my forester, do by their own eye-shot witness. Wherefore, in God's holy name, I charge you, that on quick sight hereof, you deliverly make known unto our alder-liefest sovereign, the alarmful tidings of this their so sudden approach.

"Resteth ever thine, in all dutiful kindness, and so farewell.

"LEOFENOTH."

The second communication ran thus:—

"From Northweorthig, V. Id. Jun. A. D. J. C. DCCCLXXIV.

"Speed—speed! the Danes are entering this burh! Fly to your weapons! I will raise the fyrd (11) of my wapentakes (12) before day-dawn. No more. Love me as you do, and so farewell.

"UMFREIG, HERETOCH."

"To Aldhelm, Stallere of the Lord the King."

Thus then were the hollow and rotten treaties of these unprincipled invaders trampled upon in the very blood of the faithful and too confiding objects of their perfidy. The deceived monarch saw the accomplishment of his worst fears about to be realized—the destruction of his throne, and the massacre of his people. Terror and dejection now took place of his late

enthusiasm, and communicated to every other breast their paralyzing influence. The joyous anthem ceased, and the monks, rushing towards the altar, fell on their faces before it, and poured forth loud and energetic entreaties for heavenly succour. The church was speedily filled with the various high functionaries and superior officers, who, with the Ealdormen(13) and thanes, and chief military commanders, sought directions from the King, at this perilous crisis. Consternation sat on every brow save that of the veteran Eadulf, who indignantly charged those in authority with criminal remissness, in not having collected a sufficient force to withstand the enemy, in lieu of trusting to the hollow faith of treaties never meant to be observed(14).

A proud specimen of the warrior of a more chivalric day was Eadulf, a nobleman descended of an ancient and illustrious family in Wessex, and created an Earl by Egbert, on the final victory of that monarch over the Mercians. His vast estates, the greatness of his abilities, and the splendour of his ancestry, were rendered still more conspicuous by the noble qualities of his heart—his matchless bravery, his genuine patriotism, and the active benevolence, and frank cordiality, of his disposition. He had long viewed, with painful apprehension, the declining fortunes of his present sovereign, and witnessed the gradual, but certain decay, that was stealing over the national prosperity. His counsels had been neglected, his most urgent in-

treaties and representations treated with indifference, by a monarch who too surely felt that the day of his dominion was fast waning to its close; and that every hope for the further rescue of his subjects from the powerful assaults of the Danes, would be futile and unavailing. The infirmities of age, strengthened by a long course of toilsome and dangerous service, began to weigh down the high faculties of the Earl; but his indomitable resolution remained vigorous as ever. His mind had never known fear; and, in proportion to the decay of his physical powers, seemed his lofty spirit to rise, and deepen the disdain that he felt for those feeble measures which his experience suggested, were unequal to the emergency of the times.

He now tauntingly reminded his shuddering auditory of the frightful scenes of murder, rapine, and violation, that attended the Northman's incursion but four short years before; when the noble abbeys of Bardency, Croyland, Peterborough, Coldingham (15), and Ely, were given to the flames, and the pious inmates, with their venerable superiors, put to the sword. But these reproofs, although re-echoed by a few of the more warlike of the military retainers, were soon stifled in the increasing horror of the time. The rush of the general inhabitants of the city, in every mood of dismay, towards the palace and the monastery, presented a scene of desolation and misery so affecting, that, accustomed as the brave monarch had been to the conflicts of the enemy, he tore his thinly-flowing

and silvered hair, in the extremity of his anguish; and wept, as an infant, under the feeble prostration of every hope of relief from the wildly-impending calamity.

The Abbess hastily despatched to a place of remote concealment the multitude of holy relics which had drawn such numbers of visitants to the shrines of the monastery. Amongst these were the sanctified dust of the body of Saint Wystan, and the knotted scourge, and the rudely-written and brass-bound psaltery of Saint Guthlac. With corresponding care was also secreted the vast hoard of plate, jewels, and other valuables, with which the monarchs of Mercia, the nobility, and others, urged by the awakened ardour of piety ("for God's love and their souls' need"), or the pangs of penitential remorse ("ne ira Domini nos supplantet"), had enriched its treasury. Amongst these was a crown of pure gold, and a pedalium or footstool "of rede gold," belonging to the crucifix, the gifts of the pious King Wichtlaf ("pro redemptione animæ meæ"); the cope, all of gold and silver; two palls of silk, with golden clasps; with other silk dresses, and gold clasps, and hangings; also, two gilt shrines, and nine of silver; a wheel full of small bells, much gilt, "to be turned round for its music, on feast-days;" fifteen great roods or crosses of gold and silver, and numerous smaller ones enriched with gems; and a large collection of images, thuribles, basins, ewers, chalices with their patines, and other articles, of purest

gold. With these latter were likewise deposited the various regal charters, private muniments, and other records, respectively confirming the foundation of the monastery, and its extensive possessions, privileges, and immunities.

Many costly movables, including the table of the great altar, which was lavishly decorated with embossed plates of gold, and with gems "various in colour and species," and which with its rich embroidered pall, had been the gift of King Ethelbald, were conveyed to a spacious cruft or crypt beneath the choir of the abbey church. A magnificent picture of the Virgin, which hung over the high-altar, and had been the donation of King Offa, who had himself received it as a gift from "the lord the pope Adrian (16)," and which had previously belonged to the oratory of the pontifical palace, at Frescati, was removed, by the royal permission, to one of the ancient Roman dungeons existing beneath the palace, and extending under the bed of the adjacent river. In like manner also the trophied banners and armour, belonging to the tombs of the royal line of Mercia, were transferred to a still more secret depository, whither the more important of the national archives, with the regalia, and the more considerable of the personal effects of the King, were as promptly conveyed. A flat, float, or craft, was freighted with one of the royal treasure-chests, and with various costly packages, consisting chiefly of the ornaments of the palace; but its burthen

being unequally distributed, in the precipitous haste with which it was stowed, so as to occasion an undue pressure on the head of the vessel, it became *crank*, and shortly after sank in deep water, within sight of the anxious observers, who vainly endeavoured, with the aid of grapnels, boat-hooks, handspikes, stowers, and various other implements of that kind, to effect the recovery of the lost freight. Meantime, the inhabitants consigned their various articles of value to the custody of the soil, or cast them, securely packed, into the shallower depths of the river. And as they did so, the awful passage in the writings of Jeremiah rose to the despairing utterance of the monks that stood near. "Behold, the noise of the bruit is come, and a great commotion out of the *north country*, to make the cities of Judah desolate, and a den of dragons."

CHAPTER XIII.

"SAXON BRITAIN."—EXTRACTS CONTINUED: INCREASE OF THE POPULAR ALARM.— THE EFFORTS OF THE ILLUSTRIOUS WARRIOR, EARL EADULF, TO RESTORE THE COURAGE OF THE MERCIANS.— HIS NOBLE AND PATRIOTIC ADDRESS. — THE ASSEMBLY OF THE "HEAH WITAN."

LEN. And, as they say,
Lamentings heard i' the air; strange screams of death;
And prophesying, with accents terrible,
Of dire combustion, and confus'd events,
New hatch'd to the woful time.

Macbeth, Act ii. sc. 3.

Up, up, for honour's sake!

DRYDEN.

THE last rays of the setting sun now gilded the forest-hills of Nedewode, and lighted up the dim and distant mountains of Peac-lond (17) into a momentary distinctness. Still arose, from their tranquil and unsuspecting bowers, the jubilant echoes of the feathered minstrels; while the flowery herbage, and the blossoming foliage, knew not of the desolating approach of the Pagan spoiler. The pale and infant moon upreared her timid crescent in the opposite heavens, and one gentle star, of deepest lustre, shone, in solitary companionship, beside her.

It was from the north-east that the dreadful visitation was looked for, and a thousand eyes and pointing hands were stretched towards the spacious vale whose distant boundary leaned against the horizon, in that direction. Wild and fearful rumours of ominous dreams, unnatural prodigies, and portents of dire and ill-boding import, that had been seen in the heavens, as well as of monstrous events that had come to pass on the earth, during the previous Lent, gave additional horror to the heart-oppressive narratives of violation, slaughter, and rapine, which, from time to time, circulated amongst the multitude. It was reported by some, that on the *north* side of Saint Peter's church in Efer-wic, "there was seen from the roof to run blood" (18); while others averred, as a still more terrible marvel, that, at Snothryngham, a shower of blood rained from heaven, and bloody crosses fell on men's garments, as they walked abroad (19). One told how fiery dragons had been seen in the air, at midnight, from the eastern coast, as extending across the sea from Norway and Denmark (20); and another related, that, at the time of the last portent, a wonderful cloud, sometimes bloody and sometimes fiery, appeared all over the coast, and the country adjacent (21), foretelling, as it was believed, the return of the dreadful Danish tempest.

Every house had poured forth its dwellers, all eager to combine in flight or defence, as the ruling will might decide. Few, however, were they who coun-

selled a recourse to arms; the preponderating numbers, and superior preparation, of the enemy seeming to render resistance useless. The heroic Earl, Eadulf, whose cheerful countenance, and frank, soldierlike deportment, had long rendered him popular, on occasions of national excitement, with every class and party of the state, endeavoured to rally the broken spirits of his countrymen, by adverting to the brave defence of Earl Algar, who, with his seneschals, Wibert and Leofric, and the youth of Hoiland, Deeping, Langtoft, and Boston (to which latter were added the retainers of the intrepid Asgot, sheriff of Lincolen-ceaster, the family of Morcard, lord of Brunne, and a few who joined from the Croyland monastery, under the leadership of the gallant Tolius, a monk), had resisted, but four years before, the encroachment of the same enemy; and who, but for the precipitate and indiscreet valour of a portion of his followers, would have triumphed over the immense superiority of numbers.

" '*Nimed eure saxes*(22)*!*' " exclaimed this worthy representative of Saxon chivalry, "and let these heathen curs howl beneath the lightnings of your steel; while the rolling thunders of your war-cheer track them from hill to dale! Ay, 'scatter them as the stubble that passeth away by the wind of the wilderness!' By the holy ashes of Saint Wystan, an I had but men to treat with, instead of false-hearted coistrels as ye are, I would build me a bridge of the reddest masonry that ever crossed the channel of old

Trenta (23)! What fear ye, ye down-lying hogs? Are their blades of higher temper than ours? Is the 'Raven' a prouder war-sign than the 'Dragon?' Have we not dearer issues at stake than they? Not for corn, or for cattle—for money, or for merchandise, do I ask you to draw the sword of defence. These, the bounty of the seasons, or the labour of our hands, may give back to us, if lost; but for things holier and dearer than these, and which, if once surrendered, can never be recovered, I entreat—I command you, to prepare your strength for battle! Would ye behold your wives and daughters still shining around you in all the lustre of their uncontaminated beauty? Would ye survey your ancient homes, still embowered by their patriarchal trees? Would ye still hear the sweet chime of matins blend with the cheering return of the summer sunbeam; or the deep tones of the vesper psalmody die away on the twilight breeze? Need I ask if these things be dear to you? O woe the day when they shall be taken from you!—when the 'Dragon' crest of your fathers shall be trampled in the blood of their sons!—when the fair and lovely daughters of our race shall fall a prey to the ruthless lust of the barbarian!

"Hah! I see a gleaming of eyes, which tells me that your hearts are not dead within you!—that they pant to make good their faith to the land of their loyalty and love! Your souls seem to proclaim, in one mighty and far-reaching transport, 'The old

walls of our venerated Hreopandún shall yet rear their renowned strength, to display with increased honour, the proud, Pagan-scorning standard of Ethelbald and Offa!' Yes, ye are still men and Mercians! Ye gaze with me, the humblest of your leaders, on the peaceful towers of yon goodly and godly monastery, and ye swear, by all the blessed relics of the saints of God that are preserved in its church, as well as by the holy gospels themselves, that its last sun is not now setting; but that its shrines and altars, its consecrated vessels and pious records, shall, when time with us is no more, be reserved, as a sacred inheritance for our children! Oh, by the honour of mine ancestry, it were a dear hour to this old heart, that should behold the coming ranks of the 'Raven,' if ye would but resolutely pledge with me this glorious oath! Then, would ye not wish to see the foe fly from you, till ye had fleshed your avenging seaxes in the breasts of the desolators of Croyland. Lo! the sanguinary Oskitul—the 'feeder on the hearts of wolves,' is at your gates—he who, in the lust of devilish cruelty, smote off the venerated head of the father Theodore, as that noble martyr and victim stood at the altar of Christ! The destroyers of the sepulchre of the blessed Saint Guthlac, and of the revered tombs of Saint Cessa, Saint Bettlemus, Saint Egbert, and Saint Tatwin, threaten yon great and holy pile with their accursed brands and battering-pieces. I may exclaim, in the words of Jeremiah to Judah, in

the times of old,—"Blow ye the trumpet in the land: cry, gather together, and say, Assemble yourselves Set up the standard towards Zion: the lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer is on his way: he is gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate: and thy cities shall be laid waste without an inhabitant." The graves of our kings and warriors, the sanctified ashes of abbess and priest—of hermit and holy virgin, appeal to us against these unhallowed perturbators of the peace of the saints! The barbarian Gothrun has sworn, by the hammer of the hideous Thor, that the "smoke of our gore shall darken the sun;" while the savage Halfdene has vowed by the sword of his race, that he will "fatten the earth with our blood." God!—oh, God! they have agreed to scatter to the wild beasts of prey the mangled flesh of yourselves, your wives, and your children; and to mingle, with the spreading carnage, the bones of the ancient of your race! Hark!—methinks I hear the distant stir of the enemy!—No, my aged ear betrayed me. It is the rising note of the night-wind, that whispers, in Nature's own inspiring accents,—"Pray for the spirit of your sires!—Arouse yourselves to defend the altars of your God!"

But the tear of lofty enthusiasm—the warm glow of pious and patriotic feeling, that accompanied this artless display of eloquence, was unshared by the listless auditors. The proposition of the heroic thane met with no kindred response in the heart of the multitude.

The devoted people looked to their unfortunate King for the decision of their fate, prepared, as it seemed, with himself, to lay down their lives like the sheep. Many were they who urged a general flight: but the proposal was alike rejected by the greater number, since, to abandon their habitations was, in effect, to yield themselves up a prey to the most deplorable destitution; and, while yet the faintest hope existed, that the track of the spoiler might avoid their abode, few were those who fled from the common fate of the inhabitants.

The shades of night gradually deepened; and the distant vale became lost to the eye. Every moment seemed to add to the prevailing terror and confusion of the city. The neighbouring villages were almost drained of their population; stragglers came pouring in from every direction, all hoping to find shelter in the vicinity of the royal palace and monastery, or to gain, at least, the earliest tidings of a hostile approach, and connect their own flight or resistance with those whose counsel or aid might befriend them. None of these had, as yet, heard more of the enemy than had transpired through the ærendwracas, or messengers, of the Hold of Tueverde and the Heretoch of Northweorthig. Meantime, the King and his nobles, together with Ethelstan, Archbishop of Lichfield, Heardberht, Bishop of Cidnacester (24), and other eminent prelates, as well as priests, having seats in the Heah Witan, or "Great Council," had adjourned to the palace; the inmates of the monastery being

directed, by the venerable Abbess, to light up all the tapers on the shrines, and remain in the exercise of devotion within the choir. The solemn and beautiful chant—*Libera Nos Domine!* alternately swelled forth and died away through the pillared aisles and cloisters, where, alas, was never more to ascend the soul-rejoicing strain of the *Te Deum Laudamus!*

The crowds that thronged the main avenues of the royal residence, and that occasionally dispersed themselves throughout the various precincts of the abbey, were, at times, disposed to indulge a hope, that, as the threatening foe had not yet appeared, although reported so near at the time of vespers, he might have deviated from his intended course; and they eagerly looked for some intelligence confirmatory of this supposition. Again did the noble and energetic Eadulf seek to take advantage of their reviving spirits. Armed in his long-disused habiliments of war, and seated on an old and stately-looking charger, splendidly caparisoned, he harangued the soldiery and citizens in every quarter, showering threats, entreaties, and taunts amongst them, with unsparing vigour, to induce them to take up arms. He bade the glorious clangour of the trumpet pierce through the dull and leaden sounds of despair. He dashed amongst the sad, complaining groups, exhibiting, in his chivalrous grasp, the lofty banner of Mercia emblazoned with beaten gold, and which, with his own high-towering plumes, seemed to mock the wind. "'Blow

the trumpet in Tekoa,'" he cried, "'and set up a sign of fire in Beth-haccerem: for evil appeareth out of the NORTH, and great destruction.'" Calling individually on those whose courage and patriotic fervour were most nearly allied to his own, he urged them to rouse their apathetic countrymen to the defence of their lives and possessions. He entreated the less enthusiastic to remember the land of their birth, their parents, brethren, wives, and children. "'For even,'" he exclaimed, in the words of the Prophet, as applied to Judah, "'the husband with the wife shall be taken, the aged with him that is full of days. And their houses shall be turned unto others, with their fields and wives together.'" These, he repeated, were the high and sacred objects for which they were summoned to draw the sword: and, with all the fire of native and unpremeditated eloquence, he promised them a speedy and signal victory. But the attempt of the gallant veteran was again fruitless. The public energy had been too long depressed by the inactive spirit of the government; and the bravest of the troops, and of the inhabitants, overawed by the vast disproportion of numbers which they would have to encounter, resigned themselves to the miserable alternative of submission or flight. A belief that the enemy had changed his course still increased, as one false rumour of approaching peril succeeded another, indicating the total absence of any definite information concerning the movements of the hostile force.

CHAPTER XIV.

"SAXON BRITAIN."—EXTRACTS CONTINUED: THE APPROACH OF THE DANES DISCOVERED. — FLIGHT OF BURRHED AND HIS QUEEN.—CONFUSION AND DISTRESS OF THE PEOPLE.—RUSH OF THE DANES INTO THE CITY AT MIDNIGHT, AND GENERAL SLAUGHTER OF THE INHABITANTS.

They scathe, they ravage, where'er they light,
Justice or ruth unheeding;
They spare not the old for his locks so white,
Nor the widow for her pleading.

They slew the babe on his mother's arm,
As he smiled so sweet on his foemen:
But the cry of wo was the war-alarm,
And the shriek was the warrior's omen.

From the Danish of EDWARD STORM.

THE TERRIBLE TRUTH ARRIVED TOO SOON! Those who watched on the loftier eminence upon which the greater part of the city was built, beheld at the distances of two and three miles towards the north and north-east, two unusual lights, first white, and then glowing red and deep copper-colour, which rapidly increased, and spread into a wide-consuming blaze, illuminating the country for many miles round, and plainly shewing, from their situation, that the neigh-

bouring villages of Findre and Tueverde had fallen a prey to the flames. A dense obscuring smoke stretched for miles across the neighbouring district, while a shower of glittering sparks and flakes of fiery matter lighted up the far depths of the serene sky with a curiously-awful effect. All hope of escape from the violence and rapacity of the invader was now at an end. "The King and Queen have fled!" resounded on every side. "Fight for your lives and wives!" still exclaimed a solitary and well-known voice. The outcries of universal despair burst forth, with added horror; the wildest confusion and distress spread far and near. Here, might be seen families piling their beds and household-stuff on overloaded wains and cars, that must inevitably be overturned, with their additional living burthen, through the unwonted speed with which they were destined to travel along roads, or rather mere tracks, that were almost impassable with the aid of daylight and extreme caution. There, might be noticed costly furniture, or bales of valuable merchandise, abandoned in the common street; their hurriedly-retreating owners having, at the moment of escape, failed in some projected means for their removal. The fitful gleams of torches, from time to time, threw a ghastlier hue over the despairing countenances of those who were thus preparing for the surrender of their homes to the barbarian. Then might be witnessed youth, age, and infancy, in one sorrowful communion, quitting, with frenzied haste,

the cherished hearth, around which, but a few short hours before, their holiest and dearest affections had confidingly clung! Oh, most sad it was, to behold the agonizing mother, endeavouring to hush the cries of her alarmed infant, by folding it still more closely in her tender arms, or by imparting the balmy solace provided by indulgent Nature, the soothing and sustaining aliment derived from her own fair breast, and to reflect that both were too probably doomed, amid the horrors of that dreadful night, to meet the poniard or lance of the unsparing pagan.

A few of the hapless villagers, who had with difficulty fled from the spot already reached by the foe, now entered the city, and communicated, in accents of breathless terror, their awful tidings to the disturbed crowds that thronged the principal streets, and that collected, in denser union, round the palace and monastery. Shrieks, lamentations, prayers, and groans, not unmingled with the wilder execrations of insane anguish and with peals of delirious laughter, resounded in every direction; and, as the hurried flambards flitted across the gathering darkness, they revealed countenances livid with fear and grief, eyes bloodshot with weeping, and glances and gestures indicative of unspeakable despair.

At length arose, upon the ear of the afflicted people, the hideous clamour of the rapidly approaching demons of slaughter and rapine. In the deep and solemn hour of midnight it came! A hollow, stealthy murmur,

like the distant voice of the ocean, gradually swelled into a harsher and more diversified stream of echoes, combining every discordant contrariety of sound, and growing upon the startled ear with horrible distinctness, while the crimson heavens extending above the track of the desolating host, appeared stained with the same die that spread beneath its murderous march. As the sweet tones of the choral psalmody, ever and anon, fell on the distant ear, seeming to waft a hallowed benediction over the devoted city, it was doubly fearful, through the effect of contrast, to mark the increasing interruption of the calm and solemn strain of the midnight mass by the demoniac shouts of that sanguinary band of destroyers. The beautiful and soul-uplifting chorus—"We will adore the Lord of Glory; we will worship the God of our salvation!" was, in the imagination of the moment, as the voices of assembled angels, calling on the persecuted believer to join the blessed company of the apostles and martyrs in the heavenly paradise. "And the crucified King himself calls you by your name: 'come, my well-beloved, come, that I may crown thee!'"

The moment of the "banquet of blood" now arrived. But who shall paint the terrors of the onslaught—the awful tumult of those "waves of destruction!" The thunderlike tramp, and the hoarse neighing of the war-steeds, the din of the weapon-struck shields, and the clashing harness of the riders,

were blended with the shrill wild blasts of the Danish battle-horns, and the savage roar of tumultuous menace, that broke from the disordered squadrons. Soon were seen the prepared firebrands of those in advance; while sword, pike, mace, pole-axe, and short-axe, brandished, as with impatient fury, by the gigantic horsemen in their masked helmets and chain-shirts, gleamed dismally in the broken light. Huge, swelling banners, ensigned with the dreaded "Raven" (25), the "Swan of the Ocean" (26), the "Eagle" (27), the "Hawk" (28), the "Belted Apple" (29), and the "Golden Dragon" (30), rose from the centre of the troops. Like the sails of an advancing fleet, towering above the stormy waves, did they soar above the wild forest of pikes and javelins that fretted beneath, while the latter, in their restless disturbance, might have been compared with the dark pines of Norway, chafed by the northern blast.

At the first impetuous assault, the feeble and unprotected gates gave way, and the fierce and fiend-like bands poured into the doomed city, with a rush like that of the enraged billows of the Baltic, whose gloomy shores had given them birth (31). The swollen flood of tempest wrath rolled onward. A dense flight of arrows with poisoned piles, heralded the approach of the ferocious enemy.

> "Bitter and sullen as the scornful laughter of the sea,
> was the war of the shouting multitude,
> burning and furious!"

Then might hell herself have ceased to gloat over her dire catalogue of misery, and have looked, with envious admiration, on the sanguinary and monstrous acts that were perpetrated. Steel and fire, those rival ministers of fate, vied with each other in their task of annihilation. As a herd of wolves, pursuing defenceless sheep, did that ruthless foe appear. Screams of agony, drowned in the brutal shouts of the heathen exterminator, were heard around, while frenzied cries of "Fire! fire!" burst, at intervals, from the wretched occupants of the barricaded houses. Voices, broken by convulsive sobs, were urging, vainly, prayers for compassion. Every species of barbarity, every refinement of cruelty, was committed by the devastating Dane. Neither age, sex, nor quality was secure from the wantonness of atrocious outrage. The native ferocity of the barbarian invaders seemed augmented by the helpless condition and submissive behaviour of the inhabitants. Crime and horror stalked over the land, with mad impetuosity, and abject misery knelt and pleaded in vain.

"There were thronging spears—awful was their fury—
Conspicuous was the red rippling blood—
Terrible was the onset—it was unlovely—
It was misery—it was death unparalleled."

Yes—death in every form was there! Infants torn from the breasts of their shrieking mothers, were tossed from lance to lance, amid loud peals of jeering laughter (32). The mangled husband, ere life re-

ceded, beheld the violated forms of wife and daughter added to the bleeding list of victims, or gazed on the slow destruction of a beloved son, under the protracted pangs of devilish torture. Impaled, crucified, and hanged corpses glared terrific amid the flames of the ravaged habitations, while the streets were almost choked up with headless or dismembered trunks, and deluged with the crimson tide of carnage.

> "Plurima perque vias sternuntur inertia passim
> Corpora, perque domos."

A few of the more beautiful of the wives and daughters of the unhappy nobles and citizens were reserved for a fate worse than death itself, the same cruel reservation extending, also, to the female occupants of the neighbouring monastery, of which we shall find occasion more particularly to treat in an ensuing chapter.

CHAPTER XV.

"SAXON BRITAIN."—EXTRACTS CONTINUED: THE DANES BURST INTO THE MONASTERY, AND DESTROY THE ABBESS AND MONKS, AND ALL WHO HAD SOUGHT REFUGE WITHIN ITS WALLS.—THEY DEMOLISH THE SHRINES AND SEPULCHRES OF THE SAINTS.—HUMANITY OF KING ASKEW.—MARVELLOUS ADVENTURE OF THE MASKED DEFENDER OF THE TOMBS OF THE KINGS.

Know ye that hideous hubbub? hark! far off
A tumult—like an echo!—on it comes,
Weeping and wailing, shrieks and groaning prayer,
And cries of blasphemy!

Anon.

THE prior, Dunstan, had now celebrated the high mass, assisted in its service by the brethren Byrhtric and Wilfrid, deacon and sub-deacon, and the youths Osulf and Wulfric, censer-bearers. The male portion of the monastic body were participating in the communion of the holy mysteries, when the savage yells and frightful uproar of the advancing enemy grew momentarily more distinct. At length, the wild, disordered rout of bloodstained fiends burst into the sacred edifice. Sword and torch, axe and ategar, were whirled aloft, in hideous manifestation of the savage delight with which each fell grim monster

looked forward to his renewed task of demolition and slaughter. Strugglingly and impetuously rushing towards the choir, that crimson crowd of assailants seized and put to death the unfortunate inmates of the monastery, as well as the more distinguished of the inhabitants, who had fled thither in the vain hope of deriving safety from its consecrated roof. Alas! the "sanctuaries now needed sanctuaries to protect themselves!"

Terrible as the lightning, from which his name was said to have been deduced, the gigantic Askew towered above the lofty forms that surrounded him, his stately gait and proud look sufficiently evidencing his kingly dignity. The savage Oskitul, of stature less prodigious, but of more ferocious and cruel aspect—the stern, gloomy Gothrun, whose sable armour well accorded with the lowering shadows of his harsh repulsive visage—the wild, madly-sportive, and danger-loving Amwynd—and the cold, austere, and haughty Halfdene, bore each the impressive aspect of high warlike distinction. Like angels of darkness, amid the dreary revels of their infernal abode, the four latter monarchs shared, with furious acclamation and delight, the progress of the work of ruin. Ere the lapse of a few minutes, every portion of the extensive pile bore blushing evidence of the horrid desecration that had stained its walls. The illustrious abbess, Ethelflæda, a lady of the royal house of Wessex, was ruthlessly beheaded by the barbarous

Oskitul, as, with eyes serenely uplifted to heaven, she implored a last blessing for her faithful flock. The venerable prior was struck dead to the earth, by the ponderous battle-axe of the unrelenting Gothrun. The sub-prior, Ethelbert, a most learned and sanctified follower of Christ, was pierced through the body by the lance of Amwynd. Halfdene's terrific sword, like the sickle of the reaper, shore its intended measure at every stroke, and deacon, sub-deacon, and censer-bearers, were successively immolated by his sanguinary hand. The chivalric Askew alone warred not with the defenceless; his widely victorious arm scorned the sacrifice of unresisting victims.

The maddening revel of intoxicated cruelty continued. Chapel, oratory, and sacristy, *secretarium*, library, and refectory, every recess to which terror inspired a retreat, was rapidly explored by the blood-dripping weapons of the exulting barbarian. A few of the more ill-fated of the sufferers were selected for torture, in order to enforce a disclosure of the places of concealment to which the treasures of the monastery had been conveyed. We pass over, in shuddering silence, the details of monstrous and unimaginable cruelty to which these unfortunate victims were exposed. Their importunate prayers for death were, at length, only acceded to on the condition of betraying the fatal secret. In a moment of despairing weakness, while the quivering lips were seared with a hot iron, the important intelligence was divulged, and an

immediate respite from agony dealt forth by the exterminating blow of the oppressor. Old and young, cleric and laic, rich as well as poor, noble, peasant, and serf, man and woman, had now fallen, in undistinguished slaughter. Death—indulgent death, spread his crimson pall over the confused heaps of the mangled slain.

As soon as their task of blood was accomplished, the inhuman ravagers proceeded to demolish the sepulchre of Saint Badeges, and the various marble tombs that surrounded it,—pious memorials of the holy men and women that had rendered the monastery so famous by their sanctity. There was the stately sepulchre of the first abbess, Ecgburh, daughter of Aldwulf, King of the East Angles. To the right of this latter was the sepulchre of Saint Eadbald, priest and anchorite, and also that of Saint Wynfled, a woman of God, and sometime confidant of Saint Werburg. The sepulchres that contained the ashes of Kenewara, and those of the two following abbesses, Æthelhild and Ethelfritha, were on the opposite side; as was also the tomb of Saint Wathrmund, the confessor of Saint Badeges.

The tombs of the holy virgins, Beda and Æffa, and the sepulchre of Maiklulf, a man of God, and once servant of Saint Guthlac, were to the right and left of the arched entrance leading into the choir. Other tombs, belonging to the Earls Eadmund, Ælfred, Hundberht, and other of the more pious of the

nobility of Mercia, benefactors of the abbey, were situate on the western side of the church; and it may here be remarked that in those times no one was allowed to be buried in the church, unless it were known that he had so pleased God in his lifetime, as to be worthy of such a burying-place. Besides these deeply-interesting and venerable records of the holy and beneficent of earlier times, there were numerous shrines of costly marble. That in honour of Saint Guthlac contained his scourge and psaltery; while the sanctified dust of the body of Saint Wystán drew peculiar veneration to the shrine devoted to his glory as a martyr.

Stake and hatchet, axe, mace, and sledge-hammer, soon performed their work of desolation. The first stroke of the ponderous battle-axe of Gothrun rent asunder the venerated shrine of Saint Guthlac, through its entire fabric,—the hideous fracture extending itself from the celestial crown of rewarding glory above, to the thorny wreath opposed as a symbol of earthly travail beneath. The second assault of the prodigious weapon scattered the whole majestic memorial into countless atoms. The famous sepulchre of St. Badeges, the stately shrine of Saint Mary, and the curious and elaborately-splendid font presented by King Aldwulf during the abbacy of his daughter, were the next objects of the despoilers' fury. Then fell the tomb of Egburh, with its noble effigy of Roman sculpture. Other de-

vastations quickly followed; and the red flame of the pitched brands soon shewed one undistinguishable mass of hideous ruin.

"To the tombs of their kings!" roared the terrific Oskitul, brandishing aloft the sword with which he had slain the pious Ethelflæda, abbess of the monastery, and which, four years before, had rendered headless the venerated Theodore, Abbot of Croyland. "By the red beard of the 'Thunderer' (33), the bones of the hated Ethelbald shall share the same fate as those of the idiot, Guthlac. Yon iron-plated door with the 'Dragon' standard over it, leads, doubtless, to the spot. Speed, fellows! down with the barrier!—Noble Askew, lead the way! Amwynd, bid thy best axemen follow! What, ho, my bersærkars, my lambs, my little ones, ye shall wanton to your hearts' content in the trophied armoury of death. Ye shall clothe yourselves in the damasked panoply of princes, and turn their august bones into skittles. Noble Askew, why pausest thou?"

"I war not with the weak," replied Askew; "the slaughter of shaven monks, or of defenceless women and children, would have failed to win for me the name of 'Dragon of the Shield.' The dead, with their trophied arms, invite not my hostility; nor shall a follower of the 'Landeyda' enter those halls of silence."

"And I will rake no more among dry bones and rotting corses," exclaimed the youthful Amwynd,

surveying, with an expression of disgust, the shapeless remains of mortality that lay blended with the confused heaps of broken sculpture around. "By the fair limbs of Freia (34), my assaults shall now lead me to the secluded cells of yon old dark building to the west of the cloister. Know ye not, brothers, that its shadowy walls contain some of the fairest maidens in Mercia?—'Ye must not judge of the beauty of our women,' said Ceolwulf, King Burrhed's late minister, 'from those six ancient attendants of the sour-featured Abbess, that remained with their superior in the choir, after the rest of the holy sisterhood had received the mass and retired to their several dormitories. The first nobles of the realm have sent hither their daughters for instruction, or noviciate; and by my beard,' added he (though his eye-brows wear more hair than his chin,) 'there are amongst them damsels of unheard of loveliness!' Come, Gothrun, rid thy grim face of its mirky clouds for once, and let it reflect the sunny smile of good fortune that awaits us." And, as he spoke, he impatiently struck with his lance the mouldering skull of Saint Badeges, unconsciously reducing the precious remain to ashes.

"Away, mad boy!" responded the addressed monarch, with a frown of contempt; "away! and solace, if thou wilt, thy beardless cheek with the soft contact of another. I would not give the truncheon of a broken lance for the 'fair limbs of Freia' herself!

'Boys will have toys!' My days for such foolery are past. I am old," he added, with a grim freezing sort of smile, 'and love to look on treasure!"

The royal chiefs now separated; Amwynd on his purpose of sacrilegious violence; Gothrun to ransack the vaults and other secret depositories of the palace; Askew to search those of the Citadel and of the Eastern Fort; Halfdene to cut off the retreat of the king and queen, and secure such valuables as they might have carried off; and Oskitul to pursue his intention of destroying the tombs of the kings.

"To the stately sepulchre of King Ethelbald the 'Proud,'" cried the furious warrior, "and perish the last fragment of the detested pile!" His voice was as a trump thundering.'

A fierce and sudden rush, accompanied by yells of insane exultation, then followed, in the direction of the august and sacred asylum of the royal dead. An unexpected resistance, however, presented itself to the accomplishment of the hostile design.

A tall figure, in sable armour, whose features were concealed by a masked helmet, stood, with uplifted axe, as if to forbid the approach of aggressive outrage. Calm and motionless it stood, like some enchanted sentinel, commissioned to protect the cherished depository of the royal ashes. A feeling of superstition mingled with the growing astonishment of the advancing party.

"Stand aside, thou masked pretender," said the

Danish monarch, "or, by the bull's head of Radegast (35), I will dash thy sable form into as many parts as there lie atoms heaped together on this accursed floor."

The black stranger made no reply, but retained his position, as with unaltered resolution. The irritated Oskitul, at the following moment, rushed impetuously forward, and aimed a tremendous blow, with his gigantic sword, at the mysterious object of his resentment. Raising its dark battle-axe, with a swift, yet solemn motion, the spectral-looking guardian of the dead warded off the assault of its opponent, while the long-cherished weapon of the king was shivered into fragments, and the broken hilt alone remained in his grasp. Astonished, but not daunted or confounded, and uttering an oath of pagan fierceness, whose thrilling accents might have awaked every ancient sleeper in the forbidden cemetery, the daring Oskitul, with prodigious force, dashed with his ponderous shield against the rigid and still silent object, which stood with its strange weapon in the defensive position assumed at the moment of the former attack. The shock with which the opposing king closed against the statue-like warrior was but exerted to his own disadvantage, for the masked form remained fixed and motionless, while, recoiling from the effect of his impeded violence, the baffled monarch reeled backwards and fell, his seven-coated shield lying scattered, in numerous pieces, around him. Stunned,

but not dismayed or discouraged, the savage chief was, for a few moments, unable to rise. His followers hastened to assist him, but he spurned them, with wrathful vexation. Soon afterwards, he recovered some share of his vigour, and, starting to his feet, he rushed, weaponless and with naked front, towards the sombre adversary, who, now seizing the discomfited king in his appalling grasp, hurled him, as if he had been a feeble infant, over the heads of his nearest attendants, the mighty and warlike Dane descending, with a thunderous shock, on the distant pavement. In the tumultuous retreat which succeeded, the torches were accidentally extinguished, and a darkness, like that of the grave, spread through the awful pile. Hurriedly raising the body of the now senseless Oskitul, the Danes sought, for some time in vain, the obscure portal by which they had entered, stumbling repeatedly over the huge fragments of stone coffins, and crushing the mouldering skeletons in their fall. The terrible idea of pursuit by the shadowy champion added to their fears, and not with groundless cause; for, ere the small veteran party having the charge of their disabled leader succeeded in retiring from the ill-fated edifice, above two hundred stalwart followers of the "Raven" standard fell lifeless beneath the blows of an invisible axe.

CHAPTER XVI.

"SAXON BRITAIN."—EXTRACTS CONTINUED: THE BRAVERY OF KING ASKEW.—ADVENTURE OF THE ARMED MASK CONCLUDED.—THE TOMBS OF THE KINGS DESTROYED.—THE PALACE, THE MONASTERY, AND THE CITY GIVEN TO THE FLAMES.

Hor. I'll cross it, though it blast me!
Hamlet, Act i. sc. 1.

Intelligence of this mysterious and fearful adventure was speedily borne to the redoubted Askew, who, with the stern delight of heroic daring, resolved to brave at once the terrors of the midnight masker, and to proceed alone in the enterprise. In vain did his deeply-attached adherents endeavour, through superstitious fears, to dissuade him from the rash design, he remained inexorable; and, seizing a torch, while his right hand grasped, with eager enthusiasm, the mystic brand of Sindri, the precious bequest of Hrædla, he hurried to the scene of retaliated massacre.

A stillness, impressively solemn, pervaded that crowded receptacle of death; and, as the lurid flame of his torch revealed the wild ensanguined spot in all its offensive horrors, even the firm heart of the

peerless warrior of the North saddened with a vague emotion of pain. There was something indescribably horrible in the strange mixture of human heads with those of statues—of hands and feet of decaying flesh with those of fractured marble. The severed heads of the shaven monks were, with a dismally-grotesque effect, mingled with the hairless skulls of ashen paleness, to which they seemed to bear an uncouth yet awful resemblance. Cerement and gown were confusedly strewn together, as in mockery alike of the dead and living; while fallen chalices, lying amidst pools of human gore, suggested a sickening thought of the revels of unearthly monsters. But the attention of the princely chief was not directed to these individual objects: he gazed, for a few moments, on the sad spectacle of diversified ruin, and, with hurried step, passed over the heaps of pallid and stiffening corses, in the direction of the royal mausoleum. The pavement, where unencumbered by the thickly-scattered bodies and fragments of marble, was slippery with blood; and, in striding over a wide and ghastly heap of carnage, the impatient monarch lost his footing, and the torch became extinguished by the sudden shock. Ere the lapse of an instant or two, he sprang on his feet, and, undaunted by the succeeding darkness, continued to shape his course for the entrance to the royal sepulchre. At length, after much difficulty, he approached the perilous spot; but the form of the

mysterious foeman no longer stood in solemn defiance before the bannered portal. In a voice of thunder he exclaimed:—

"In the name of Odin, or of the god thou mayest reverence, come forth, thou doughty gate-keeper, and defend thy trust; or, by the flying-dragon of Nidarfiolli (36), I will level, with one blow of my weapon, this idle barrier." But the shadowy being came not, and the lonely echoes of the mighty building alone replied. "Come forth, thou champion of the charnel," he continued, striking furiously with the hammer of his axe the iron-plated door of the sepulchre, "come forth, thou stabber in the dark—thou wily butcher-fiend—thou lynx-eyed Grendel (37) of the grave-house! Art thou gone back to thy marble sleep, thou traitor to the dead, ere thy dim steel hath closed its task? What, hoa! thou many-armed monster, awake!—By the doom-day of Odin (38) he cometh not! The lazy cur croucheth beside his carrion.—O ho! O ho! I will yet arouse thee. Why, corpse-seed! why, fiend-spawn! why, worm of darkness!"

A wild thundering of hammers was now heard at the great gate of the church; and, after a brief interval, the massive door fell inwards with a far-resounding crash. At the next moment the recovered Oskitul, at the head of a recruited band of followers, rushed into the dismal scene of his late discomfiture, with oaths of direst vengeance.

"Where is this black henchman of Ethelbald and his fellows?" he shouted fiercely, "by the banner of my sires, I would splinter another weapon with him, though eternal destruction were in the venture!—Give place, brother warrior, the adventure is mine!"

But the challenge of either was disregarded; the armed shade advanced not at their bidding.

"We will now batter to dust the bones of 'proud' Ethelbald," cried Oskitul, "billsmen, do your office.—Noble Askew, join us."

"I fight not with the fallen!" again responded Askew, "nor shall a weapon that owns my standard invade the last abode of departed greatness! The shrines of Christian saints, as they call them,—those pageant memorials of idiots or impostors, as I believe them to be,—call for the axe of utter extermination.—With cerement or coffin I have no cause of quarrel, just or unjust!"

Such was the partially-redeeming elevation of sentiment that shed a barbaric glory over the wild and savage character of the Northern hero, who now hastily retired from the spot which he had sought with such chivalrous exultation.

The task of destruction was cheerfully undertaken by the fierce and barbarous followers of the remaining monarch. Long, however, did the massive door, guarding the cherished depository of the royal ashes, oppose the utmost fury of their attack. Mace and battle-axe, and many a missile of stone and iron, sent

forth their echoing appeal to the unshrinking barrier. Still it stood, in forbidding defiance, like the dark-mailed spectre which resisted their former attack. At length, the gigantic chief, with an oath of impatient fury, bade his almost wearied retainers stand aside, when, summoning every resource of his powerful frame, he aimed a series of impetuous blows with his prodigious mace at the long victorious portal, which slowly yielded its hallowed trust, and was nearly battered to pieces, ere it finally sank beneath the assault. A roar of wild and discordant laughter hailed the achievement of its overthrow. This formidable obstacle withdrawn, the attention of the King and his ferocious band was now directed to the steep and winding descent, through which the night-wind sighed heavily,—as if nature herself sympathized with the peaceful tenants of that ancient abode, whose long-venerated remains were thus threatened with sacrilegious outrage. The deep and dreary descent of black marble steps being passed, the tumultuous intruders found themselves at the extremity of the spacious mausoleum. Then burst on the gleaming eyes of the destroyers a scene that awed into mute and breathless admiration even those stern and savage hearts into which so little of human sympathy had ever been admitted. The moon, which had now got round to the west, poured her mild and lovely beams, through a sky of cloudless serenity, upon the dimly-chequered perspective of wreathed and lofty pillars that sup-

ported the light and rounded arches of the widely-extended roof. A pale and melancholy glory seemed to sit on the long line of gorgeously-sculptured tombs, that stretched away, on either side, through the broad majestic avenue. Not a word was spoken by the intruders; the gaze of each was rivetted, as by a spell, on the imposing details of that calmly-magnificent and pleasingly-solemn recess. They advanced with slow and hesitating steps, instinctively avoiding every disturbance which the clashing of their weapons against the iron rings of their war-trappings was calculated to produce. A sense of subdued hatred to the calm inmates of that sequestered retirement,—a veneration for the deceased glories of the past, still living there in the trophied inscription and the surviving effigy, mingled with the saddening impressions of the scene; and they paused—those ferocious warriors—in irresolute and anxious mood; forbearing to disturb a spot that afforded so deep and touching a contrast to the rude, disturbing spectacle of desolation and terror spread forth above.

But alas, for the repose of the venerated remains around them. It happened that a sudden change came over the tranquil features of that peaceful gloom, awakening a correspondency of emotion in the excited breasts of the direful visitants. The faint and tremulous lustre of the moonlight became suddenly obscured by a red and dazzling outbreak of flame, which told that the splendid palace of the

Mercian sovereigns was about to be numbered with the lost existences of other years. The stormy cries of the invading host, during their unresisted career of rapine, arose with renewed violence. The air became hot and impregnated with the incense thus offered at the shrine of pagan triumph. No longer could the wild habit of destruction be restrained; every hand grasped, with redoubled energy, its varied instrument of assault. A simultaneous shout of recovered fierceness sent forth an echoing answer to the acclamations and yells without. The whirlwind of maddening fury again prevailed. The work of unpitying demolition immediately followed. Every expedient which the most practised art of spoliation could suggest was put into force, and, ere one short hour had become parcel of the past, every revered and time-honoured memorial of the sceptred successors of Crida (the illustrious founder of the Mercian kingdom) had ceased to exist.

The plunder of the monastery was conveyed to the Eastern Fort, for division amongst the leaders and their followers; but, as arts and sciences were not objects esteemed worthy of their notice, the entire and valuable store of ancient manuscripts, which had been chiefly collected in the interval between the elevation of Theodore to the see of Canterbury and the death of Venerable Bede, was left to perish in the subsequent wreck of the noble structure, whereby "a principal key of antiquity was lost, to the great pre-

judice of posterity." Nor was the destruction of the superb and holy edifice long delayed. The ravagers had scarcely quitted its denuded walls than the various combustibles prepared for the work of ruin were introduced, and soon a prodigious column of broad black smoke rose curlingly above its pale towers, while, through the tall narrow windows of the majestic pile, might be discovered the swift advance of white or delicately-green flames, edged with smoke of a pallid hue, which spread a calm, soft glory over the stately interior, as if they meant not to destroy, but to add fresh charms to its wonted beauty. In a brief space, however, the illusion vanished, as a thin, spouting flood of dazzling yellow fire gushed, here and there, through the opening masonry, sometimes shooting forth in stronger eddies, and winding itself around the massive walls, as if it grappled with the resisting power of a fierce enemy, and then growing pale, and sinking into the dim, ash-coloured smoke, as if it fainted with the labour of the strife, till, at length, gaining renewed strength, and changing its hue to a deep copper-colour, streaked with red, it burst forth, with a rushing roar, amid a whirlwind of mulberry-tinted, spark-spangled smoke, and, like a huge, coiling serpent, furiously encircled every part of the doomed building. In a few moments afterwards, all was one vast, blood-red, blinding sheet of flame. The crash of falling stone and timbers again and again succeeded, and, at every new ac-

cession of fuel, the billowy inundation again and again poured forth its devouring surges, seeming to threaten the very heavens with its appalling fury, while a shower of radiant sparks and glittering fragments of the crimson wreck added to the splendours of the scene of destruction.

In the lapse of two brief hours, the beautiful church (with the exception of a fragment of the choir and the crypt beneath), and all the buildings of the monastery, were most fatally consumed in the flames. Thus fell the stately abbey of Hreopandún, which had been founded soon after the introduction of Christianity into Mercia.

The hurricane of desolation continued throughout the night. Many sought refuge within the cryptic chambers beneath the ancient ruins of the Roman temple of Diana, but their place of retreat was discovered, and they fell beneath the merciless weapons of the enemy, or perished amid the flames that consumed the long-dismantled and mouldering fabric. The ancient palace, with such of its inmates as had abstained from flight, shared in the wide-spread ruin, the Citadel and the Eastern Fort being only preserved, until such time as the Danes should determine their overthrow.

At length, the gloom of night was withdrawn; the eastern hill was crested with the rays of the returning sun; and the desolations of the retiring darkness were manifested, in all their hideous and appalling features.

An occasional shout of havoc, or a shriek of despairing anguish, still arose at intervals, seeming yet more harsh or distressful, when heard amid the fresh and dewy calmness of the morning. Here and there might be seen banded groups of the barbarian spoilers. stretched upon the daisied sward, overcome by the toils and excesses of their late sanguinary and rapacious outrage; while, among the ghastly heaps of slain might, in some instances, be found infants sucking at the breasts of their deceased mothers!

When the gorgeous sun looked down from the joyous depths of his azure solitude, he beheld the confused and smoking masses of the demolished buildings. The swelling strains of the hallowed choir no longer hailed his ascending beam. Prostrate gates, broken columns and arches, fragments of porticoes with their rich diagonal mouldings, and blackened heaps of once polished stone, was all that remained of that magnificent edifice, whose soaring towers and gilded pinnacles had caught his lingering farewell, ere he sank behind the western hills of Peac-lond and Nedewode: and he seemed to gaze, with enquiring pity, upon the human heads piled in pyramids, and on the mutilated and half-consumed bodies of the slaughtered inhabitants, that mutely proclaimed, as in dumb horror,—" Here *was* the once proud city of Hreopandún!"—

" Then was in Mercia,
wide and every where
the praise of the supreme Governor

destroyed on the earth.
Many were disturbed
of God's skilful servants (39).
Then was much groaning
to those that in their hearts
carried the burning love
of their Creator in their mind.
Then was the source of miracles
so much despised,
the Governor of victory;
the Lawgiver of the sky;
when man broke his rights.
And then was also driven
the beloved man,
Burrhed, from the earth,
over the rolling of the waves,
over the bath of the sea-fowl,
the long-haired monarch,
wise, and in words discreet,
over the roaring of the waters,
over the country of the whàles;
of an home deprived!"

NOTES TO PART V.

(1.) This description was founded on a notice relating to the demesne of the monastery of Thorney, in Lincolnshire, in 870. "Here apple-trees arose, there vines crept along the fields, or twined around poles."—*De Gest. Pont.* 294.

(2.) This excellent prayer is a literal translation from the Anglo-Saxon, with the exception of the short passage printed in italics. I shall occasionally introduce similar specimens of the poetical compositions of this early age, marking such lines as it may be necessary to insert, for accordance with the tenour of the narrative, in a similar manner.

(3.) In 680, John the precentor, or chief chanter of St. Peter's at Rome, brought over hither the yearly Orders and Course of Singings and Readings, as was practised there. Not long before this period, the Latin and Greek languages had been introduced, with all the liberal arts and sciences, through the exertions of Theodore, archbishop of Canterbury, who was originally a Greek monk, of superior eminence for his parts and learning. Bede informs us that the knowledge thus derived continued to flourish and increase until his own times; but with the death of this distinguished historian it fell into decay. "At my accession to the throne," says the great Alfred, in 872, only two years before the period described in the text, "all knowledge and learning were extinguished in the English nation; insomuch that there were few to the south of the Humber who understood the common prayers of the church, or were capable of translating a single

sentence of Latin into English; but, to the south of the Thames, I cannot recollect so much as one who could do this."

(4.) *Hold* is mentioned as a dignity in Æthelstan's laws, whose *were* (fine for slaying a man) was higher than that of a *thegn*.—Wilk. *Leg. Sax.* 71. Many persons with this title are mentioned in the "Saxon Chronicle" (101, 103), in the years 905, 911.

(5.) Twyford is here alluded to. Places situate near the ford of a river were sometimes called *Twifyrd*. I find, however, that *Tueverde* was the ancient mode of spelling for a place with this name, situate in another part of the kingdom.

(6.) The term *Heretoch* implies the leader of an army. It refers here to one having the command of domestic troops resembling our militia.

(7.) The Saxon name of Derby. "We may suppose," observes the editor of "Glover's Derbyshire," "that the casual name of *Northweorthig*, or the northern market, had reference to its position with respect to Repton or *Repandún*, the capital of Mercia, situate at about the distance of eight miles on the southern bank of the Trent." I may here remark that *weorthig* does not signify a market, but a public way, or street. The Saxon name of Tamworth was *Tamaweorthig*—namely, a town, or street, on the river Tame. Derby received its present designation from the Danes. "It is probable," says Sir Francis Palgrave, in his "History of the Anglo-Saxons," "that the greater part of the names of places in Yorkshire, Lincoln, Nottingham, and other shires of the *Danelagh*, which now terminate in the syllable 'By,' were fixed on them by the Danes, in whose language *By* signifies a place of abode." The reader will, however, remember, that *By* has also the same signification in the Saxon tongue, and that the names of places having this termination are of plentiful occurrence in every county throughout England; while the provincial maps of modern Saxony will readily present us with a host of appellations in which this word forms the last syllable.

(8.) The *Gerefas* were of various kinds. The officer here alluded to, was a judicial personage, whose rank was inferior to that of the *eorl* or *ealdorman*. We learn from WILK. *Leg. Sax.*, 115, that, amongst his other functions, he was to defend the abbots in their necessities.

(9.) The *Stallere's* office somewhat resembled that of the *comes stabuli* of the Romans, and was identical with that of the "constable of the host" among the Franks. He had the charge of the king's horses, and, as Sir F. Palgrave remarks, "became, by an easy transition, the marshal, or commander of the king's cavalry, which in fact constituted the whole efficient body of the army." We meet with the following able definition of the word in my learned friend Dr. Bosworth's elaborate dictionary of the Anglo-Saxon language:—STEALLERE [*On the western coast of the Duchy of Schleswig some of the chief magistrates or governors have still the title of* staller; *as, for instance,* Staller of Eiderstädt, of Nordstrand, *places where, to this day, the old* Friesian *language* is spoken, *among the farmers, descended from an old* Friesian *colony in this part of Schleswig. The Frs.* staller, stalling, *m. signifies dignity, quality, a principal officer or magistrate, a captain, leader, director, a locum tenens. The Old Swed.* stallare *m. the Icel.* stallari *m. magister aulæ,* mareschalcus imperii, *are visibly derived from the Ger.* stall, *stable. The Lat. mid.* constabularius *or* constabulus *is only a bad translation or mutilation* of the A.-S. steallere; *the Ger. and Frs.* staller.] *A governor of a place, a steward;* loci, domûs, aulæ præfectus, œconomus. *Convent. int. Apum. et Conv. Bath. Wanl. Cat.*, p. 150.

(10.) This abrupt change from the third person to the first, which has often so amusing an effect in the epistle of an illiterate person in our own day, was of frequent occurrence in the correspondence of the most eminent for their scholastic acquirements in the age to which the text alludes. Instances of such a transition are to be found in the letters of Alfred himself.

(11.) An army chiefly of citizens.

(12.) The *wapentake* is a certain division of a county, called also a hundred; it is so called from an ancient custom, wherein he that came to take the government of a hundred, was met by all the better sort, who came and touched his lance, or weapon, by which ceremony they were sworn, and confederate. Sir William Dugdale attributes to Egbert the division of the nation into counties, hundreds, and *wapentakes*, about the year 800.—*See his Origines Judiciales*, cap. 9, p. 22.

(13.) Eldermen, senators, noblemen. An *ealdorman*, though inferior to an *etheling*, was the superior of the *thegn*, and the highest officer in the kingdom; he was the chief of a shire, and attended the *witena gemot*.—Turner's *Hist. A. S.* b. viii. c. 7.

(14.) The Mercians had already formed various treaties with their treacherous and unrelenting invaders, all of which had been speedily broken. In 868, the Danes passed over into Mercia, and wintered at Nottingham, which so alarmed Burrhed, that he implored the assistance of his brother-in-law, Ethelred, king of Wessex, to which the latter readily assented, and, with his younger brother, Alfred, and Edmund, king of the East Angles, joined the Mercians, and offered battle to the enemy; but the Danes, apprehending the hazard, kept themselves within the town and castle, till the Mercians, wearied out with delays, came to articles of truce with them, upon which the Danes abandoned the place, and returned to York with great booty, where they continued about a year, practising great severities and cruelties. In 869, they made great devastations in Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Huntingdonshire, Cambridgeshire, &c. In 873, the Mercians were again constrained to make peace with them, notwithstanding which, it was too evident that their insidious and unprincipled enemies were about to harass them with fresh hostilities. Burrhed, in a charter to Croyland, dated August 1, 868, states himself to have made it at *Snothryngham* (Nottingham), before his brother's friends and all his people, assembled to besiege the pagans. Its British name was *Tiguo Cobauc*, the "house of caves."—Asser, 19. *Ty*, is a "house" in Welsh now,

and *cwb*, a "concavity." In the charter of 868, it is called *Snothryngham*, the "house of Snothryng," which, in the days of Ingulf had become changed to *Nothingham*—P. 18, 19. TURNER'S *Hist. A. S.*, vol. i. b. iv. c. vi. p. 502. I must respectfully differ from Mr. Turner, in thinking that *Snothryngham* implied the "house of Snothryng," the composition of numerous other names of places possessing the syllables *ing* and *ham* suggesting a more general derivation. *Ing* signifies a meadow, and *ham* a dwelling-place. The beautiful meadows contiguous to Nottingham seem to warrant the application of *ing* to its Saxon name. Asser conjectures that the name may be derived from *snidan*, to cut, in allusion to the neighbouring excavations, and in this supposition Camden seems to concur. I have occasionally met with the proper name of Snothro, or Snothr, in connection with northern history, which word appears more likely to have furnished the incipient syllable. To this may be added the further fact, that we have historical evidence that the town of Nottingham once occupied both sides of the river Trent, and that Edward the Elder, in 924, repaired the bridge over that stream betwixt the two towns.—See "Saxon Chronicle," under that date. This circumstance seems to confirm the etymology I have assumed, as the meadows would thus form the early site of a moiety of this ancient *burh*. It may, however, be suggested that *ing* also implies a son, and thus the word *Snothringham* may be compounded of *Snothr-ing-ham*, the "house of the son of Snothr," a similar structure to that of Birmingham, which signifies the "house of the son of Beorme."

(15.) The resolute behaviour of Ebba, the abbess of Coldingham, deserves particular notice. In order that the enemy might be so disgusted with their appearance as to leave their virginity uncontaminated, the abbess prevailed on the nuns to disfigure themselves, by cutting off their noses and upper lips, she herself setting the example, by thus mutilating her own face. This expedient had the desired effect in saving their honour, though at the expense of their lives, for the brutal Danes, enraged at their disappointment, set the monastery on fire, and consumed

the abbess and her nuns in the devouring flames.—MATTH. WEST. manuscript copy of *Peterb.* in the Cottonian Collection.

It may be here remarked, that the editor of Glover's "Derbyshire," in describing the movements of the Danes, at this period (vol. i. p. 337), makes a note for the express purpose of telling us that *Lindissey*, a word occurring in his text, was *Lindisfern*, whereas a little more geographical knowledge, on his part, would have satisfied him that Lincolnshire, or the northern portion thereof, then called *Lindissey*, and now Lindsey, was the situation alluded to, and not *Lindisfarne*, or "Holy Island," on the coast of Northumberland.

(16.) The first pictures used in this island for the ornament of the Anglo-Saxon churches were brought from Rome.

(17.) A rocky, mountainous, and barren tract of country, in the north-west part of Derbyshire, now called "the Peak."

(18.) Such an event is reported to have taken place in 825. —*Sax. An.* MALMESB. INGULF., &c.

(19.) This terrible marvel is said to have occurred in the reign of Britric, king of the West Saxons, who began to rule in 784.

(20.) This portent is recorded to have happened in Wessex, during the reign of Britric.

(21.) This prodigious appearance is said to have been manifested in 979, about the time of the coronation of Ethelred II.— MALMESB. SIM. DUN.

(22.) "Nimed eure saxes!" was the celebrated signal of Hengist for the destruction of the Britons at a banquet, in 455.

(23.) This bridge-building with human bodies was no new idea. Amongst other instances of the course of rivers being

impeded by the corses of the slain, William of Malmesbury informs us (*Pontif. lib.* iii. p. 261) that, in a battle between Ecgfrid of Northumbria and the Picts, in 674, the bodies of the latter stopped the current of the river which flowed near the scene of contest. Eddius fills two rivers with the dead, over which the victors passed "siccis pedibus."—*Vit. Wilf.*, c. xix. p. 61, ed. GALE. TURNER.

(24.) Sometimes, and, I think, more properly, spelt *Sidnacester*, now Newark-upon-Trent, Nottinghamshire. King Ethelred divided Mercia into five dioceses, viz., Hereford, Worcester, Lichfield, Leicester, and *Sidnacester*, all which were completed in 679. Offa procured Lichfield to be made an archbishopric in 777.

(25.) The ensign of Denmark. The "Raven" was the messenger of Odin. It has been well remarked, that, as an attendant on the "god of battle," the "father of the slain," this *genus* of the feathered race has ever evinced indefatigable diligence, and, having credit for a faculty of scenting the coming carnage, they might well lay claim to the veneration of men whose existence was war, and amusement slaughter. The flag of Denmark could not have been emblazoned with a more appropriate device than this "bird of fate."—STRONG'S *Frithiof's Saga*, notes, p. 32. In 878, the famous magical standard of the Danes was captured by the English. It was named the *Reafn*, or *Reafan*, from its having the figure of a raven embroidered upon it by the three daughters of Ragnar Lodbrog. Asser, in his "Life of Alfred," describes it as woven in one noontide. It was reported that, prior to a successful engagement, the "bird of fate" would appear to clap its wings, as betokening joy; but when a disastrous contest was about to take place, it would remain motionless, with its wings in a hanging or dejected position. Asser adds, "et hoc sæpe probatum est." Mr. Sharon Turner observes, on this passage: "He might have said that nothing was easier to be contrived. Bartholin has collected some traditions concerning such standards and the raven's prophetic powers, p. 472–480."

(26.) The standard of Jutland.

(27.) The "eagle" was the emblem of rapidity, as the lion was of bravery, and the dragon of prudence. The ancient Wittichind informs us that the arms of continental Saxony contained these associated figures. In the present instance, the "eagle" may be considered the ensign of some Russian or Prussian tribe or band of warriors that confederated with the regions of the Baltic, in the invasions of this period.

(28.) The "hawk" may be considered the not inapt symbol of some Norwegian chieftain. The hawks of Norway, for strength and flight, were the most famous in the world.

(29.) The arms of Upland were a "golden apple," or globe, surrounded with a belt, in allusion to the monarchy.—PERINGSKIOLD, *Monum. Upl.* 10.

(30.) The "golden dragon" is introduced here as the ensign of King Askew. The same device, though differing, as heralds would say, in its *position*, was borne in the standards of Mercia and Wessex.

(31.) The Danes were composed of different nations, inhabiting the countries of Jutland, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway. "These regions," observes Lyttleton, "were originally inhabited by the Goths, who altered their names to that of Danes, in the reign of their king Dan, the son of Humel. That they were of the same origin as the Saxons appears from the ceremonies of their religion, the customs of their country, the ferocity of their manners, and their propensity to cruelty and rapine." The English called them by the name of Pagans, till they were attended in their descents by some Danish princes, at which time they distinguished them by the appellation of the Danes. The French called them by the general name of Normans. They were originally called Northmen, or Norsemen, which was subsequently corrupted into Normen, or Normans. The Danes, pro-

perly speaking, were but a branch of those Gothic multitudes which, swarming from the northern hive, had possessed themselves of all those vast tracts that surround the Baltic sea. Historians have distinguished the north by the appellation of "Officina gentium." A late work on "Scandinavia," the joint production of Drs. Crichton and Wheaton, endeavours to disprove the fact, so long entertained by the historians of Europe, that the north was ever entitled to be thus denominated the "store-house of nations," and ridicules the idea that its population could ever have been so considerable as to have supplied those teeming hosts that poured like a deluge, year after year, over the more cultivated and wealthy portions of the globe. It assigns the source of those vast irruptions to the regions of Scythia, or Tartary, contending that the northern countries of Scandinavia were unable to support so vast a population, and that, even now, they would be inadequate to make such a provision. The fallacy of this argument may, I think, be perceived, when we consider that historians have not represented the Scandinavians as living *on their own resources*, but drawing on the means of others for their support, by a general and wide-spread system of piracy, practised by every class of the people, from the monarch to the lowest serf. When we reflect, also, on their habit of carrying away the women of other nations into captivity, and on the necessity they were under to make as numerous additions as possible to their population, to repair the vast drains effected upon it by so long a series of wars, we may see that extraordinary means were used to perpetuate the supply of this numerous body of warlike adventurers, who were destined to gain their means of existence, as heretofore, by rifling the possessions of their more opulent neighbours. When this system of robbery was put an end to by the improved means of defence employed by other nations, the inhabitants of Scandinavia, driven to the necessity of more peaceful pursuits, and adopting a wide system of emigration, disused their former efforts for the increase of population, and gradually declined in numbers and strength as a people. The prodigious bodies of men that perished in the ninth and tenth centuries, in the English conflicts alone, might

well suffice to render the north no longer the "Officina gentium."

(32.) A celebrated chieftain of the Danes, named Oliver, gained the contemptuous surname of *Burnakal,* or the "Preserver of Children," from his dislike to the favorite amusement of his soldiers—that of tossing infants on the points of their spears. This cruelty was practised by the Danes so late as the year 1010, when they spent three months in the most barbarous ravages, burnt Thetford, Cambridge, and other places, and killed all they could meet in their way, tossing infants on the points of their spears. Mr. Turner has the following passage descriptive of the desolations and misery which attended the progress of Ingwar through East-Anglia four years only before the period referred to in the text: "The picture annexed to his route represents a burning country, the highways strewed with the victims of massacre, violated women, the husband expiring on his own threshold near his wife, and the infant torn from its mother's bosom, and slain before her eyes to increase her screams." ["Maritus cum conjuge aut mortuus aut moribundus jacebat in limine; infans raptus à matris uberibus, ut major esset ejulatus, trucidabatur coram maternis obtutibus."—*Abbo. MSS.*, p. 3.] The following particulars relating to the cruelties which have been perpetrated at various times by invading or avenging adversaries are transcribed, with slight abridgment and revision, from authentic historical sources. In 1010, the Danes passed into Oxfordshire, which they wasted, together with the country of Buckingham, Bedford, and Hertford, and having burnt the towns and killed mankind, and all other living creatures, they retired to their ships, as so many ravenous wild beasts, glutted with blood, to their dens. In the following year, they took a wider range than ever. For on the north side of the Thames, with fire and sword they wasted all East-England, Essex, Middlesex, Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, the counties of Oxford, Bedford, and Cambridge, with half of Huntingdon, and the greatest part of Northampton; and on the south side, Kent, Surrey, Sussex, with the counties of Southampton, Wilts, and Berks. Soon afterwards they laid siege to Canterbury,

which in twenty days they took. Here they committed unheard of barbarities by way of sport and diversion; they slew some by the sword, threw others over the wall, others into the fire, hung up some * * * [*à verendis,*] infants torn from their mothers' breasts were either tossed on spears, or had carts drawn over them, matrons and virgins were dragged about by the hair and ravished. The same scenes occur in the march of King Sweyn, in 1013. He gave orders to his men to waste the fields, burn the villages, rob the churches, kill all the males, and reserve the other sex for their lust: which orders were rigorously executed. The miseries and desolations inflicted by the Scots and Picts were fully equal to those of the Danes. So, when the Saxons broke their league with the Britons, at an earlier period of our history, the wildest barbarities were perpetrated. They wasted the country with fire and sword. The people were slain in heaps, the stately buildings demolished; priests and bishops slain without distinction at the very altars. The living were scarce sufficient to bury the dead. If we look into the still earlier records of Britain, we shall find equally revolting details of barbarity. We find, from Tacitus and Dion, that when the *Iceni* and *Trinobantes* revolted, under Boadicea, and sought to free themselves from the weight of the Roman yoke, they miserably destroyed such of the inhabitants of London and Verulam as had not found refuge among the troops of Suetonius, hanging, burning, and crucifying their unfortunate victims with all the cruelty and inhuman outrage that a barbarous multitude, elevated with success, could imagine. They took no prisoners, either to preserve them for exchange or ransom, according to the law of arms, but cut in pieces both Romans and their allies, to the number of eighty thousand. The Roman wives and virgins were hung up naked, and had their breasts cut off and sewn to their mouths, that, even dead, they might seem to eat their own flesh, whilst the Britons feasted in the Temple of Andate, their Goddess of Victory. Again, if we revert to a later period of our history, we shall discover that all this cruelty was equalled on many occasions. In 1002, a general massacre of the Danes took place by order of Ethelred. No age or sex escaped; the women were butchered as well as the men, and the brains of

children dashed against the walls. At London, at the time of this execution, great numbers fled to churches, but these sacred places were no security, for they were all without pity slain as they stood embracing the altars. And when the multitude found themselves masters, they proceeded to new barbarities, dug holes in the ground, put Danish women in them up to the waist, and then set fierce mastiffs upon them, which cruelly tore off their breasts. A popular fury, when backed by authority, knows no bounds, nor authority itself when it has broken public justice. To descend to a later period. In the reign of William the Conqueror, Malcolm, King of Scotland, ravaged the northern provinces with excessive barbarity, ferocity, and fury. The open towns and churches he burned to ashes; the old and young were butchered without regard to age or sex; children were snatched from their mothers' breasts, tossed in the air, and received on the points of lances; and every art of barbarity was practised which could afford delight to a savage disposition. That the reader may not think these instances of cruelty too dreadful to be credited, unless authenticated, the words of the original are transcribed to satisfy him in a point which seems to require them:—"Per terras Sancti Cuthberti discurrens, multos rebus privabit et vitâ: villas ecclesiasque cum illis, qui in eas confugerant, concremando; senes et vetulæ gladio obtruncantur; alii indifferenter confodiuntur: rapti ab uberibus matrum parvuli projiciuntur in altum et lanceis excipiuntur; hâc enim crudelitate maximâ pro ludi spectaculo delectabantur Scoti, bestiis crudeliores. Virgines verò aliquas et juvenes quosdam duxerunt miseros et captivos, et reversi sunt sic in terram malam."—HEMINGFORD, cap. 10, Gale's edit., vol. ii. p. 459. Brompton corroborates this charge, by asserting that Malcolm wasted Teesdale, Cleveland, and all the neighbouring parts; that he burnt several cities, killed abundance of noblemen, &c.—BROMP., p. 966. See likewise SIM. OF DURHAM, p. 200. Further instances of insatiable and fiend-like barbarity promptly accost us as we cast our eye through the annals of either Scottish or English history. In 1137 (reign of Stephen), David, King of Scotland, having entered Northumberland, in the behalf of Matilda, the ruder sort of the army too tragically revenged the injuries of that

princess, by ripping up the wombs of big-bellied women, and tossing their infants upon the points of spears, slaying the priests at the altar, and dismembering the dead bodies after a most inhuman manner. In 1216, King John ranged through all parts with his cruel mercenaries, who, as Matthew of Paris assures us, spared neither age nor sex, suffering none to escape their barbarities; and he further relates, that they took priests from the very altar, with the consecrated host in their hands, and then wounded, tortured, and robbed them; and that to extort money from people of all conditions, they hanged some * * * [*à verendis,*] others by the legs and feet, some by their arms, hands, or thumbs, injecting salt and vinegar into their eyes; and others they laid upon trivets and gridirons over burning coals, and then put their parched bodies under ice to cool them: so that now all commerce ceased, and no markets were held but in cemeteries and churchyards. It is strange enough that as we draw nearer to our own times, we shall perceive occasions when yet greater enormities were committed. The foregoing instances of barbarous ferocity are nothing to the cruelties practised on the English by the Dutch, at Amboyna, in the reign of James I. They were of so horrid and demoniac a nature as no time nor age could parallel. They exercised such strange and savage tortures as could hardly be thought to proceed from Christians or those of human race. The pen recoils from detail. Similar records might be adduced, from the annals of almost every other nation, to shew that the same wild love of cruelty and slaughter has existed in an equal degree in other countries; but we have already seen enough to allow that, however barbarous, monstrous, and revolting were the tortures inflicted by the Danes on their enemies, they were fully equalled by those exercised on themselves by the Saxons, and by different nations on each other;—nations which had less excuse for their atrocities, inasmuch as they professedly maintained a religious system that forbade bloodthirstiness and revenge; while the Scandinavian code enlisted these passions among the principal virtues.

(33.) Thor is described as the god of thunder, and the strongest

of beings, earthly and heavenly. He is represented as a tall figure, seated on a throne, and having a red beard, indicative of the lightning which he is supposed to wield.

(34.) The goddess of love and beauty, the Venus of the North. She is represented as standing naked in a car. "The court of the mansion of Freya," observes Mr. Strong, "is denominated *Folkvangr*, the 'receptacle of the people,' intimating, probably, the multitude of her worshippers."

(35.) An idol named Radegast, represented with a bull's head in his breast, and an eagle on his head, is mentioned by Montfaucon from Grosser's "History of Lusatia," and is supposed by Mr. Turner to be more Oriental than Teutonic, and to have come into Germany from the latter Sarmatian tribes. As the Danes were descended, as well as the Saxons, from the Scythians, and their religious faith alike derived from the same people, I have, in the course of these Notes, availed myself generally of the records referring to the Northern superstitions, as in some degree common to the Danes and Saxons; without seeking to ascertain, what indeed would be of little advantage to the reader, how far the Norwegians, Swedes, Danes, and Saxons differed in their preference of this or that deity, or what modifications of the mythic system, originally introduced in the North, eventually obtained among a divided posterity. These are questions from which the writer of a work like the present may well be supposed to abstain; since the most laborious Northern antiquaries have found it a task of the most onerous difficulty to elucidate a subject over which the shadows of time have thrown so deep an obscurity.

(36.) This mythic creation is thus alluded to by the "Völuspá:"—

"Then will come the dim
and flying dragon;
the fierce serpent from below
the mountains of Nida,

he floats on his wings;
he hovers over the plain;
Nidhöggr, over the dead."

Again:—

"There will come the obscene dragon flying,
the serpent from Nidar-fiolli:
he carries the corpses in his wings:
he flies over the ground.
The infernal serpent, Nidhöggur:
now the earth gapes for him."

See also Notes to Part VIII., No. 55, vol. iii.

(37.) A malignant being, thus described in the Saxon poem of "Beowulf:"—

"There was a more grim spirit called Grendel.
Great was the mark of his steps,
he, that ruled the moors,
the fen, and the fastness
of the Fifel race."

He is represented as seeking opportunities of slaughter under the cover of darkness, whence the allusion in the text:—

"He departed to observe,
after night had come on,
how in the lofty mansion,
the warlike Danes were residing,
after the quaffing of the beer.
He found there within
the assembly of the ethelings
sleeping after the feast,
knowing no sorrow.
This won-scæft of men,
this creature unhealthful,
grim and greedy,
soon was ready,
reeking and fierce,

and he took away in their rest
thirty thegns.
Then again he departed,
satisfied with plunder,
to return home,
from that slaughter."

(38.) This great event is thus adverted to by Mr. Turner. "They had some remarkable traditions preserved in their ancient 'Völuspá.' One, that the earth and heavens were preceded by a state of non-entity. Another, that at a destined period the earth and all the universe would be destroyed by fire. This catastrophe was connected with a being, that was to direct it, whom they called Surtur, or the 'black one.' Till this day Loke, their principle of evil, was to remain in the cave and chains of iron to which he was consigned. A new world is to commence at this period; the good will be happy. The gods will sit in judgment, and the wicked will be condemned to a dreary habitation. The 'Edda' ends with another description of this final period, which presents it to us in a more detailed shape.

"'Snow will rush from all the quarters of the world. Three winters without a summer will be followed by three others, and then wars will pervade the whole world. Brother, father, son, will perish by each other's hands. The wolf will devour the sun; another the moon. The stars will fall from heaven. The earth trembles. Mountains and trees are torn up. The sea rushes over the earth. Midgard, the great serpent, hastens over it. The ship made of the nails of dead men floats. The giant Hrymer is its pilot. The wolf Fenris opens his enormous mouth; the lower jaw touching the earth; the upper, the heavens. The serpent breathes poison over heaven, and the sons of Muspell ride forward: Surtur leads them. Before him, behind him, a glowing fire spreads. His sword radiates like the sun. From their course the bridge of heaven is broken. They move towards a plain, and Fenris and Midgard follow. There Loke and Hrymer meet them with all the infernal genii. The hosts of the sons of Muspell glitter round. Heimdal sounds vehemently his tremendous trum-

pet to awaken the gods. Odin consults. The ash Ygrdrasil trembles. Every thing in heaven and earth is in fear. The gods and heroes arm. Odin, with his golden helmet, moves against Fenris. Thor assails Midgard. Frey falls, beaten down by Surtur. The dog Garmer attacks Tyr, and both perish. Thor kills the serpent, but dies also. And the wolf devours Odin. Vidar seizes the monster's jaws, and at last rends them asunder. Loke and Heimdal slay each other. Surtur then darts his flames over all the earth, and the whole world is consumed.'

"It then proceeds to describe the new world."

(39.) A few days after the demolition of the abbey of *Hreopan-dún*, the inhuman invaders destroyed the celebrated nunnery of *Hanbyrig*, or Hanbury, a few miles distant, which had been erected, about the year 680, by Ethelred, and by him put under the government of his sister, St. Werburgh, who was buried and enshrined there. The religious, however, forsook their abode, and removed to *Legge-ceaster* (Chester), the venerated remains of that eminent saint, before the Danish firebrand reduced the consecrated fabric to ashes. The shrine of St. Werburgh, it may be remarked, has been converted into a throne for the Bishops of the diocese, and the cathedral itself is dedicated to St. Werburgh.

PART VI.

THE DOWNFALL OF HREOPANDÚN; OR, THE LAST DAYS OF THE OCTARCHY.

(A Continuation of the Preceding Narrative.)

O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance: thy holy temple have they defiled, and made Jerusalem an heap of stones.

The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the air: and the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the land.

The Psalms of DAVID.

Guile, violence, and murder, seiz'd on man;
For milky streams, with blood the rivers ran.

THOMSON.

Then weren the Danes so furis and bold,
That everich Englishman weren in moche fere:
They seken for Plunder of Silver and Gold,
And al els yat gode is, yat they can come nere.
They eaten ure Metes, and dronken ure Wines,
And all y-dronke usid ure Maydins perforce;
Ure Wives also, O woe the sad Tymes,
When Man colde not save ne his House ne his Horse.

RICHARD OF ROCHESTER.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE "NORTHERN CHRONICLES."—EXTRACTS: THE DIVISION OF THE SPOIL AMONG THE DANISH LEADERS.—MYSTERIOUS INCIDENT.—THE SAVAGE CHIEFS RELATE THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THEIR FIERCE CRUELTY IN THE SACK OF THE CITY.—KING ASKEW'S NOBLE REPROOF OF THEIR BRUTALITY.

The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan: the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones: for they are come, and have devoured the land, and all that is in it; the city, and those that dwell therein.

Jeremiah, chap. viii. v. 16.

THE first grey light of the returning dawn beheld the Danish chiefs assembled in the Bur-reaf, or Tapestry-Chamber, of the Eastern Fort, an edifice which stood without the city, at the distance of an arrow-flight from the great gate built by Offa. The apartment alluded to was boldly groined and vaulted; and its strong oaken floor was studded with large iron nails. On a frumstól, or raised seat, of carved oak, at the head of a spacious table—

"stony oak, a massy *table*,
Bright and burnished as 'twere steel,"

sat the fierce and haughty Askew, the renowned

leader of the "Host," in this combined royal expedition against Mercia. On a tapestried couch, at its lower extremity, reclined the still weary Oskitul; while Gothrun, Halfdene, and Amwynd, occupied the high-backed and well-cushioned benches, furnished with pedalia, or foot-stools, on either side. A tall covered chalice of embossed gold, filled with warm spiced wine of generous quality (memorials of the wreck of the late princely monastery!) stood before each monarch; and ever and anon the shrill tones of a whistle, appendant to the belt or neck-chain of one of the party, a loud shout, or, in lieu of either, the blow of an axe, or ategar, on the table, gave notice to the cup-bearers waiting without, to replenish the vacant vessels. An enormous heap of coin and bullion, mixed confusedly with jewels and costly ornaments, and with massive beakers and chargers of gold and silver, was distributed over the board; its gaudy splendour curiously contrasting with the pale melancholy light of the early dawn. On the rugged floor, which was partially strewn with rushes, were scattered in the wildest disorder the rich ivory scrinia and cypress coffers, and the reliquaries of crystal and amber, curiously wrought, which had enclosed the more valuable part of the pillage. A stern and savage magnificence characterized the scene.

King Askew was nine feet in height; his long curling locks, bright as the yellow amber of Pomerania, whose hue they wore, descended in rich masses

over his broad majestic shoulders; a polished steel cuirass covered his body, and over it he had thrown a jeweled chain and rich robe of yellow, embroidered with runic figures in gold. His countenance was open, but stern; and his mien and air betrayed the accustomed deference that waited on his paramount authority. At times, however, a smile of gracious significance illumed his haughty features; and his voice, which was habitually loud and commanding, would assume a correspondent expression of mildness. A helmet, surmounted with high plumes, added to the remarkable amplitude of his stature.

King Oskitul was clad in chain mail, with a gorget of polished steel variegated with gold. His matted thick yellow hair hung straight over his face; his eyes rolled fiercely in their orbits. His features, seldom free from the distortions of passion, presented the haggard glare peculiar to unbridled ferocity. His voice resembled, in moments of excitement, the cry of some wild beast, rather than the utterance of human organ. Over his lofty casque he wore the head of a wolf with the mouth open—a fit emblem of the malignant and fierce character of him whose hideous aspect it crowned with additional frightfulness. His appearance might have reminded the more fanciful gazer of the roaring cataracts and subterranean caverns of his native North.

King Gothrun was advanced in years; his brow was knit with a dark perpetual frown; yet a cold

satirical smile at times lighted up his bloodshot, heavy-looking eyes. He still possessed uncommon strength, though his bald head and hoary beard spoke of decline, and loss of earlier vigour. He was sheathed in sable panoply, and his appearance might have suggested a recollection of the Dovrefeld mountains, whose jagged summits were clad with snow, or rough with glaciers, and whose lower regions were covered with dark forests of pine, dimly seen through the fogs, rains, and tempests of the North;—or, to adopt another image equally suitable, he looked like an old ruinous castle, seated upon a high and craggy rock, whose base yet confronted with haughty indifference the continuous assaults of the ocean.

King Halfdene seldom smiled; but a look of malignant joy would gleam over his hideous features. When he was excited by anger, he would clench his bony hands and laugh like a fiend; or utter hoarse guttural sounds, accompanied by convulsive motions. His teeth were usually clenched with a savage wildness, and his voice rivalled the sullen cry of the bear. The type of his form might have reminded an observer of the bare and dreary, the rugged and dismal, wilderness of rocks and snows that constitutes the inhospitable region of Samptland.

King Amwynd was still of youthful age and appearance. His light flaxen ringlets showered down in glossy profusion over a corslet of silver inlaid with gold; his gorget sparkled with jewels; and his

mantle of bright crimson was embroidered with flowers and runes of a thousand diversified hues. A light ringing laugh, and a shrill-toned voice, were his most marked characteristics; and to these might be added, a restless impatient habit of gesticulation that reminded the spectator of a wild beast seeking, or seeming to seek, an escape from his cage. His eyes occasionally glared with unnatural lustre. He was subject to sudden and frightful bursts of rage—impetuous and overboiling rage; when he would utter fierce cries, and leap like a wild animal; while the veins of his robust limbs would swell almost to bursting. He might be described as resembling in character the tempestuous channel at West Fiord, adjoining the Lofoden isles, off Norway; or the Maelstrom at Mentuna, so terrible in the annals of northern navigation.

A ponderous sword, of extraordinary length and temper, and an axe and ategar, of prodigious size, lay beside each of these wild and ferocious chiefs, whose days and nights, when not engaged in war, were spent in gaming and drinking, and, as our historians record, "their prolonged debaucheries were too often stained with the blood of friends and relations." It may be mentioned here, that Gothrun, Halfdene, and Oskitul were brothers, and claimed no less distinguished a sire than Ragnar Lodbrok, the noblest warrior that the chivalry of the North had boasted, before the nativity of Askew. Their

visit to this country, at a former period (in 867), had been dictated by vengeance, and most fully and terribly had they accomplished the object of their enterprise. Halfdene, with two other brothers, Hingwar and Hubba, had then retaliated on Ella of Northumbria the dreadful sufferings and death of their valiant father, who had been taken prisoner by that monarch, and cast into a cavern or pit filled with venomous serpents, and thus destroyed. Their mode of executing the expiatory doom of their cruel enemy was characteristic of the passion of revenge in those barbarous times. They cut the form of an eagle on his back, applied a solution of salt to the mangled flesh, separated the sides from the back-bone, and drew out the lungs through the aperture. Four years before their present arrival, these confederate brethren had again visited England, with a similar thirst for vengeance, which, as on the occasion before us, was called forth by religious animosity. Be it remembered, that revenge was held in the highest degree honourable among this fierce and savage people. Odin himself was styled "The Avenger."

"By the red beard of old Thor" (1), roared Oskitul, "we had a glorious night! We have ruffled their houses for them; we have not left a cock to crow day. Nay, we have not spared them so much as their cats! Were it not for the shame I feel, that yon visored axeman escaped my vengeance, I should be the first to cry thanks to Odin. They

tell me, brothers, that this black stranger is the famous Roman count, called Gradinego, sent over on a secret mission by Pope John the Eighth; but, thunder of Thor! it is my belief that strength like his never lived in mortal sinews! By Nifleim! I was but as a babe in his grasp—I, the 'Bolt of Death,' as the Franks call me! But enough: we may meet again; and, man or phantom, god or devil, he shall not think that he is feared by Oskitul." And he smote, derisively, his huge, horse-veined thigh, with his broad, gauntletted hand, laughing at the same time like the spotted hyæna of the wilderness.

"Marked you, brother Halfdene," he continued, after tossing off the contents of his chalice, "how, in the beginning of my last night's work, I made a roaring bonfire of yon old church and monastery? By the thundering god, I believe that I burnt more tapers at one pagan mass than ever before did honour to the shrine of their boasted Virgin. By the red torch of Freia, I gave their 'Lady of Repingdon' a goodly offering—priest and altar, church and charnel, living and dead, all consumed in the same unstinted sacrifice. Yea, I spared nought of cost to make the monks of Mercia and their saints acquainted with each other. Shade of our immortal sire! how likest thou this new strophe to thy glorious death-song? Thy 'young bear-cubs' shall still prove themselves the sons of Ragnar. Ho! ho! we will yet light up a chain of fires that shall stretch from

Wintan-ceaster to Wearan-muth. Convents and villages, towns and castles, churches and palaces, shall feed the glorious sacrifice that we will offer up to Odin, the 'Avenger,' in the name of the undying Lodbrok. But say, brother Halfdene, did I not, last night, raise a fiery red-tongued serpent, that through all future time shall hiss back its scathing scorn on the dastardly act of a cowardly murderer? How did it pounce on the doomed walls of yon old and boasted monastery! Seemed it not to say, with a wild laugh and a shout of tempest-glee—'Now will I make sure of my victim?' And soon tower and roof, pillar and buttress, reeled and sank into the devouring gorge of wrathful vengeance. Gods and devils! how that hoarsely-sounding inundation of billowy flame curled and wreathed, and crackled and snorted, and rioted and plunged aloft, like ten thousand furnace-fires of our armourers, piled above each other, and blazing together! And heard you," pursued he, striking the table violently with both of his iron-sheathed fists, "the thunderous crash of the falling stone and timbers, which, ever and anon, made the waves of yon neighbouring river reel backwards with amaze?"

"Did I?" replied the stern, austere, and haughty Halfdene, with a look of unusual emotion. "By the souls of my armoured sires, I had better sport than gazing on your handiwork, though I thanked you, verily enough, for the brave light you lent to my own. I will be torn asunder by wild horses, if ever

I heard sweeter music than the howlings of yon Christian hounds, as we cast our ategars amongst them, or tossed their babes aloft, and caught them on our spears, hurling them laughingly from point to point. Yet were there some sturdy wights among the flying bands, who, with scythe, flail, axe, goad, bill-hook, pitchfork, or cowl-staff, exchanged a few hearty blows, ere they were overpowered; and these we bound neck and heels, and strung up to the trees, like felon kites, leaving them to die at leisure, since they seemed to scorn an easier death. When, by the light of yon blazing towers, whose flames seemed to lick with their blistering tongues the very vault of heaven, I caught the despairing glance of each frantic runaway, as we shot our lance-headed arrows, or drave our broad two-edged swords through their hoary sires, or nailed them to the ground with our spears, I, who scarcely ever smile, laughed till, by the hammer of old 'Thunderbeard,' I could scarce sit upright in my saddle. Nay, my sulky old courser, 'Wild-brat,' whom, with my other war-horses, I always keep in the dark, to make him more fierce, shrieked, like an unhooded falcon, with delight, as he trampled the writhing wretches. But what success had the gentle Amwynd?"

"My assaults were not less terrible than yours," returned the sportively-savage Amwynd; "nor was I less thankful to Oskitul for the light of the old towers. My diversion lay amongst the fair occu-

pants of the Western Lodging; and I would that you had seen, kinsmen, how the little trembling doves, so long shut up in that loathly prison-house, as a sort of living victims to their false gods, cowered under and shrank from my grasp, gazing towards the roof with such piteous eyes, as if they expected their Saint Guthlac and a host of winged warriors to descend to the rescue! And, strange enough to say, either Saint Guthlac, or one of his celestial brethren,—for assuredly it was no mortal warrior,—stood forth, as in bodily flesh and armour, at their bidding! I had scarcely thrown over my shoulder one lovely little downy fair-haired charmer, pointed out to me as the Lady Elstritha, daughter of the stalwart Earl, Eadulf, and was bearing her to a small adjoining cell, bidding her call on the Virgin for her deliverance; when, lo! ere one might cock an arrow, there suddenly appeared before me an armed figure, of sable hue, like that which Oskitul—"

"The same—the same, by the sword of my father, Ragnar!" eagerly exclaimed the monarch alluded to. "Where is he? Say that he lives to cross weapon once again—be it with edge or point, axe or broadsword, lance or ategar. Speak—give me hope!"

"He was clad in armour black as Gothrun's," pursued Amwynd, "and wore a close mask in lieu of a common vizor. His weapon was an axe of enormous length—"

"With a double-face and an end-spike, and a cross

above the head," again interrupted Oskitul, "the whole as black as his armour? And he wore a pointed scaly gauntlet, marked with a cross, and reaching nearly to his elbow?"

"The same, as I have good reason to declare," returned the other, with a half laugh, "for, with one blow of that monstrous axe he clove my best hood of Nibelunglandic steel, and sent the blood skipping like a brook over my ears. At the next instant, seizing me by the throat with that infernal gauntlet, he tore the fainting prize from my grasp; and, ere I could draw my sword to reclaim her, had disappeared as suddenly and unaccountably as he first became visible. And that is all I can say about him, for my wound suddenly stopped bleeding, and a cursed faintness overpowered me, so that I fell as one that was slain."

"Who, saidst thou, was the maiden?" asked Gothrun, impatiently.

"A daughter of the stout and right-noble Earl, Eadulf, famous for his warlike feats under the standard of your old enemy, King Egbert."

"Ah, then, it was, without doubt, the Roman Count, Gradinego," cried Gothrun, "who once took prisoner our brother Hubba, and, as a mark of the respect in which he held the memory of our brave father, set him at liberty on his solemn promise to appear no more in arms against the Christian."

"A promise which he, of course, kept!" observed

Amwynd, parenthetically, and he "grinned a grim grin."

"Ho! ho! ho! hi! hi! Ask the ghosts of the monks of Medeshamstede!" replied Gothrun. "Yes, it was this same Gradinego, for he married yesterday her sister: and may, therefore, well be supposed to have taken upon himself the matter of this girl's rescue."

"Then I shall be able to trace him," said Oskitul, with a savage laugh, "and when we meet again, by gods and devils—"

"You will be as heartily beaten as before!" coolly and satirically remarked Askew, adroitly finishing the sentence. The calm deliberation with which he spoke contrasting with the fiery impatience and truculent wrath of the revengeful Oskitul, added to the comic effect of the interruption.

"It is one thing to flourish, and another to fight," continued the chief King; "so take better counsel, valiant warrior, and seek not a too powerful enemy, lest he crush you, as the ox treadeth the mushroom beneath his feet."

"Stretch your arm no further than your sleeve will reach!" said Amwynd.

"By my sword and soul, I will search for him to the end of the world!" roared Oskitul, striking the table madly with his clenched fist. "I will seek for him till the afternoon of doomsday!"

"The Count Gradinego requires no seeking, when

his enemies are in the field," echoed a stern and haughty voice through the spacious chamber; and a concealed side-door, suddenly opening in the shaft of a broad pillar, shewed to the astonished party the strange object of their recent speculations! For some moments, a belief in the supernatural powers of the mysterious visitor kept every form rigidly fixed in an attitude of awful wonder. King Askew was the first to emancipate himself from the embarrassment of so unwonted and inconceivable a surprise.

"Who art thou," he demanded, "that walkest the earth like the Sisters of Destiny, choosing whom thou wilt to attend the banquet of Valhalla, or the dreary fasts of Hela? Say, whence comest thou, and what purpose hath brought thee hither?"

"Nay, rather let him answer *me*," fiercely interrupted Oskitul, and he sprang from his seat with a roar of delight, that seemed to borrow its dissonance from the tones of the wolf, the bear, and the hyæna, united together. "Bearest thou enchanted weapon or not?" he shouted, brandishing his gigantic axe, "thou shalt not quit this hall to say that King Oskitul lives to owe thee any share of his last night's debt! Guard thyself, as thou canst, and be the victory to the arm that best deserves it!"

"Hold—hold!" cried Halfdene; "let the intruder first acquaint us with his design in seeking our presence, and then be it as thou wilt.—Speak, stranger, and quickly deliver thy purpose."

"Noble Askew, to you I address myself," said the sable warrior; "the fame of thy dauntless prowess, and still more signal humanity, has travelled to that distant land which gave me birth; and made good the ancient saying of the sage—'that the truly brave are ever the truly merciful.' For myself, I am the son of a Gradinego; pride or modesty forbids me to add more than that my race have ever been soldiers, and have never stained their arms by cruelty or cowardice. Had I consulted the care of my personal safety, I had not ventured thus alone, and with thy knowledge of my hostile deeds of yesternight, as if for the purpose of prompting thee to feelings of indignation and revenge. But dearer interests than a regard for my own life have claimed this apparent sacrifice at my hands; I say, apparent, for even thus solitary, and opposed to renowned warriors and their surrounding retainers, I fear not that my humble weapon might yet suffice for my protection, in case of—"

"Stay, boaster; thy doom"—ejaculated Gothrun, agitated by a convulsive tremour.

"Is in the hands of Him," pursued the stranger, in a serenely-solemn voice that impressed his auditors with an unwilling awe, "who can arm the weakest against the most powerful; and in whose matchless strength I stand invincible, so long as I bear His sacred commission for my acts of hostility against a foe!"

"Nay, let him proceed—his death is certain," muttered Halfdene; the angle of his jaw quivering, as if

with a constrained effort to keep under his rising indignation.

"Death cometh only from Him who gave life," continued the dauntless intruder, in the same calm and lowly-modulated voice. "There is no other warrant for either.—But let me to my purpose. I came hither, valiant King of Lethra, to solicit terms for the travelling-safety of a noble lady; and, in respect to which treaty of safe-conduct, I pledge myself as a warrior, a Roman, and a Christian, to pay thee such meet composition as thou shalt honourably desire. For this end, and with these feelings alone, I came hither. If yon warlike companion of thine, who styled me a boaster, would learn the temper of my steel, let him, if he please, gain a quick knowledge thereof, albeit he survive not to enjoy his experience. I say not this vauntingly, for in my own strength I do not confide."

"By Nifleim, nor shalt thou have cause," bellowed Oskitul, his eyes flaming and sending forth ruddy sparks, while he again flourished menacingly his broad-axe over his hideous head. "Old Nidhöggur waits for thee. Die, thou stabber in the dark, and be the cave of Hela thy eternal portion!" But a look of stern prohibition from King Askew restrained the threatened attack.

The other monarchs participated in their fellow's rage. King Gothrun frowned till his grizzly eyebrows met and made one. King Halfdene clenched

his bony hands and laughed convulsively, uttering deep guttural sounds at intervals. King Amwynd emitted a fierce cry, and leapt about like a wild animal. Askew alone preserved an air of princely and majestic tranquillity.

The warlike mien and high dignified bearing of the stranger, won their way to the heart of the heroic chief monarch: a lofty feeling of magnanimity spoke in his eloquent eye as he thus replied to the count's address:—

" Brother soldier, thy wish is conceded without payment of a single thrymsa. As the deliverer of my kinsman, Hubba, from thy bonds as an enemy, thou art fully entitled to this slight return of service. Thou shalt bear with thee my mandate for the free and safe conduct of thy charge through the provinces occupied by the Danish power, so that thou wilt grant to me only, as a remembrance of an act which gives me an unwonted pleasure, some small token of thyself—a dagger, a purse, or a girdle, to be worn occasionally hereafter, from respect to thy singular courage and high-souled generosity. May I crave, too, most honourable, that thou wilt accept and sometimes wear, as a mark of my friendship, this humble chain." And as he spoke the monarch withdrew from his neck the massive and richly-chased ornament alluded to, sparkling with costly diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and sapphires.

" Most illustrious King," responded the gratefully-

affected count, "your courtesy, humanity, and generosity overpower my heart with a sense of boundless thankfulness. The name of Askew shall ever live in my dearest remembrance. And now, most gracious monarch, my necessity compels me to depart—every moment seems to chide me with a neglect of bounden duty to the high sovereign my master. Let me also add, that I will bear in like faithful memory the threats of the royal Oskitul; and, at some early period, should he still wish it, his purposed strife may freely find vent. And, lastly, generous and noble chief, let me briefly say, that an Arab steed of stainless lineage, an axe and buckler of rare Saracenic workmanship, and a mantle of Roman cloth of gold, embroidered with pearls and various precious stones, shall await the honoured acceptance of the far-famed Askew, whose magnificent and far more costly gift, the becoming memorial of princely generosity, I shall ever esteem, for the donor's sake, a proud and illustrious possession."

Here a burst of indignation from the mortified Oskitul, who had for some time been biting his beard, in a mood of rising and incontrollable wrath, formed an inappropriate climax to the flowery sweetness of the count's address. But King Askew, with a loud voice and a frowning countenance, commanded the irritated chief to forbear his threatened violence; and, looking round upon his other colleagues with the same forbidding resolution, he controlled the

vehemence which was about to break forth in acts of unmistakable hostility.

"And now," said Askew, "for the protection which I have promised." He then drew forth from his girdle a small set of tablets, and having hastily written with a sharp-pointed stile on one of the prepared leaves the brief warranty of safe-conduct usual on such occasions, he separated it from the rest, and delivered it to the count, who again repeated his warm acknowledgments.

"If he trusts so much in his chief god," said Amwynd, with a sneering grin, "why does he come to a Pagan King, his enemy, to ask for protection?" A chorus of scornful laughter, directed towards the stranger, bespoke the hearty concurrence of the royal sub-chiefs in their fellow's sage suggestion.

With an air of the most quiet composure, and a smile of more than wonted indifference,—for the party who was the intended butt of this merriment withdrew his mask as he spoke in reply, and disclosed a face already well known to all of them on the field of battle, though now identified for the first time as that of the renowned Gradinego, of whom report spoke so highly as a leader of councils and of hosts,—with such a smile, we say, and in so easy a manner, did the Roman soldier reply:—"If my humour permitted me to notice the insolent taunt of one whose yet disordered head, if I mistake not, rings with the alarm of my last night's appeal to its outward perceptions, I

would say, in answer to the idle remark just uttered, that, being compelled by affairs of urgent importance to return to the court of my sovereign, and finding my course beset with danger from the large bodies of troops scattered, with hostile design, across an invaded realm, I deemed it no dishonour, as an individual, to purchase that protection, or freedom from attack, which nations themselves have not blushed to buy. This composition, however, I would have scorned to effect, if my own safety alone had been compromised; but the companionship of a beloved wife rendered me anxious, so far as human means extended, to remove every chance of annoyance from the enemy. Hence, therefore, I offered terms to the great leader of your host, still not doubting that, whether such terms were accepted or not, the same Almighty power which has yet been prompt to protect and succour, on occasions of equal peril, would still rescue the servants of its will from the injuries with which they were threatened, through any other instrumentality which it chose to employ. It is a passant saying—'When God wills, all winds bring rain.' In a word, it is for us weak mortals to take such measures as may seem best suited for our deliverance, in cases of acknowledged danger; and leave the issue to the decision of Him who can alone promote or defeat the object of our fears or wishes."

"A true warrior trusts to his own good sword, and not to the gods," remarked King Gothrun, with an

awful attempt at a facetious smile, which drew his mouth preternaturally on one side till it nearly reached his left ear. To adopt one of the facetious Bumbur's expressive phrases—"He looked as subtle as a dead pig!" "For myself," proceeded he, "I care not the value of a dead falcon for the greatest of them. Odin and Thor may bow to each other, or kiss their own feet, before I, King Gothrun, lower my knee, or stoop my crest to either of them. I am an old man, and from my earliest youth upwards have fought many hard battles, and I never received assistance, or even wished it, from any other friends than my own right arm, and a blade of old Nibelunglandic steel."

"Believe that others are as brave as thyself," said Askew, "though they hold more justly in reverence the beneficent power that presides over their welfare."

"A power," doggedly returned Gothrun, "which assuredly does not reside in either the Nornir or the Æsir."

"That power is alone in Jehovah—the eternal triune God, to whom be praise for evermore!" Thus spake the bold representative of the Roman successor of St. Peter, the chief of the Apostles; and afterwards reverently kissed the sacred emblem on his gauntlet.

"Enough—enough," observed Askew, with a look of stern solemnity, partially addressed to the last speaker; "we sit not here, Count Gradinego, like a set of your mumbling monks, or, if you will, like our

own crack-brained scállds, to mouth over dull nothings about the concealed powers of heaven. Let each of us act man-like his destined part in the life present; always esteeming war as the chief business and best pastime of the bold and the powerful. Our religion, my lord count—"

"Promises at least more than their Christian one," impatiently interrupted Gothrun, who wished to pay the stranger something of the balance of spleen called for by his last remark. "The fat of the wild boar, Serimner, and reaming flagons of ale and mead, furnish better entertainment after death than screeching their—what do they call them—their 'psalms' and 'hymns' with so many empty bellies, and bodies as stark-bare as when they lay with the turf-mould above their heads. Ha! ha! ha! Give *me* a good weapon, and armour of proof, and I ask for no better quarters in another world than I would seek for myself. Neither priest nor prophet shall point the way for me."

"And the more so, worthy brother," said Halfdene, "as I truly believe that neither priest nor prophet knows more than ourselves of that which was, or is to follow."

"Peace, peace!" enjoined Askew, in an angered voice; "the gods are jealous, and Odin is an Avenger."

"I would fight either Odin or Thor for a gang of horse-shoes," said Gothrun, with a sort of jolly sneer, followed by a grim grin.

"Or rather for such as would fit an ass," suggested King Askew, smiling contemptuously, "since the stake pledged is likely to remain with yourself!"

A loud laugh involuntarily broke out in favour of the chief king, under cover of which, the stranger, having accomplished his purpose, thought fit to withdraw; haughtily bowing to the impious boasters, and hurriedly renewing his protestations of gratitude to the beneficent Askew. And now, while the secret door is closing upon him, reviving the mystery of his entrance, we would just say that to his possession of an old Roman plan of the edifice was attributable the knowledge which the Count had acquired of the means of private access to the Tapestry-Chamber of the castle. We will now continue our attention to the further conversation of the Danish Kings, which it is needless to say dwelt long on the strange and unexpected meeting vouchsafed by the armed mask; while Oskitul again and again, with yet more ferocious threats, poured forth his determination to seek out the earliest opportunity of a renewal of the late conflict.

"The Nornir keep you from the wind of his infernal axe!" said Amwynd; "challenge Thor or Odin if thou wilt,—the 'Furious One,' or the 'Wielder of Lightning;' but keep clear of him who is ten thousand 'Furious Ones' in one; and whose stroke is more to be dreaded than the vaunted weapon of the 'Thunderer.' You are not so stout, kinsman, but you have

met with your match. All the powers of Valhall keep me from again hearing the whiz of that awful weapon! Trust me, I will never quarrel with him, so long as there is virtue in a drugged bowl or a poisoned arrow. But I have not told you of the failure of my second adventure."

"Proceed!" said Oskitul, folding his arms with an air of contemptuous indifference, "it is likely to prove a valorous story."

"Nay, spare that sneer, and take the advice I offered you. What, indeed, says the proverb?—

'If the lion's skin do fail,
Piece it with the fox's tail.'"

After a pause of a moment or two, and when the cups of the party were replenished, King Amwynd went on with his narrative.

"As soon as I recovered my recollection of the past, and observed the flying crowd of holy damsels rushing hither and thither, and spreading the tide of lamentation far and near, I determined to choose again, and staggered faintly enough first after this, then after that, endeavouring to find out which was loveliest. My search was, however, soon decided. By Hilda, there was one sweet girl—a sister of the Heretoch of Northweorthig's wife, so famous for her charms—beautiful as Freia herself—with hair dark as the thunder-cloud of evening, and a brow white as the snows of Hecla—who struggled, with abateless spirit, to get free from my embrace, pouring forth, with a

voice like that of the silver lute, when it rises to a tempest of thrilling sounds, beneath the inspired fingers of the scálld, the threats of her gods and saints, if I desisted not from my impious purpose; when, finding her resistance and entreaties alike vain, she plucked the dagger from my girdle, and struck me twice on the throat, before I could wrest the weapon from her snowy hand."

"The females of these degenerate descendants of the 'Dragons of the Deep,' as the old Britons used to call them, have far more spirit than the males," said Halfdene; "many a young and feeble mother fought to the death for the preservation of her infant-offspring, while their more able and natural protector rushed madly upon the point of his own weapon, or fled howling like a mongrel cur from the broom-staff. But what became of your fair enemy—the lass with the locks of 'thunder-cloud?'"

"Ay, what became of her?" enquired Oskitul and Gothrun, in one voice.

"She is tame enough by this time," returned Amwynd; "and if my halsbeorg (2) had not been of excellent temper—the work of Weyland (3) himself—I had been seated at Odin's table, rather than this."

"You did not kill her?" doubtingly interrogated Gothrun, with one of his darkest sneers.

"No, mòst sable sir," replied Amwynd, with a look of gay, sarcastic disdain; "I gave her up to 'Iron-head' and 'Bluetooth Bear,' two of the wildest of my

followers, since she seemed unwilling to accept of their leader; and it appears likely that she soon repented of her choice. My bersærkars, whom some of the Christians call the 'Devil's Black Guard,' are a rough set, kinsmen, as ye have seen on many an occasion. By Hela (4), before they led her from my sight, they stripped bare her tender shoulders, and with a broad leathern fetel or belt, inflicted a couple of twanging strokes upon her dainty flesh, as a dutiful set-off against the scratches on their chieftain's neck-piece. And when, an hour afterwards," he added, lowering his voice, under a slight impression of natural feeling, "I passed, by torch-light, through the abbey-gate, her naked form lay, headless, on a pile of dismembered bodies; and its transparent whiteness, like that of newly-chiselled alabaster, shed a dazzling lustre on the surrounding carnage. Ulleraker, give me more wine!"

"If the body was headless, how knew you that it was hers?" questioned Halfdene, with a cold, satirical smile.

"They had placed her lovely head, with its black, flowing ringlets," replied Amwynd, vainly seeking to repress a blush at his own unmanly conduct, "within the grasp of the very hand that sought my life; and those delicate, yet lofty features, once seen, could never be forgotten! By Loki, the crows are already plucking the lips that might have banqueted a prince!"

"Thou devil—thou born devil!" bellowed the

scowl-eyed Oskitul, with a screeching laugh, which was followed by a hearty appeal to the wine cup—a testimony of the heightened tone of his festive enjoyment.

"But why is our noble leader so silent?" enquired Halfdene; "what hath the thrice-valiant Askew to add to the story of our adventures?"

"This up-heaped board may best speak for *me*," replied the addressed chief, frowning sternly; "but as to your boastful recall of last night's revelry, in that *I* can have no share. When blade meets blade, hilt to hilt, and shield clashes against shield, and standards are locked in equal strife,—when deck is lashed to deck, in hostile defiance, while manly hearts beat high for glory; then doth my spirit shine forth like the ascending sun on a world of darkness;—even as his mighty orb is now rising above the dim shadows of yon far-distant boundary." And he stretched his mailed arm, with a majestic air, towards the narrow, cancellated window that let in a bright flood of rays from the east, while it shewed a vast extent of hill and dale still wrapped in the misty veil of the morning. "Yes!" he continued, in a tone of increased emotion, while his features kindled with a lofty pride; "my soul loveth the gory embrace of Hilda, even as a happy bridegroom exults in the blushing beauties of his bride. But I cannot strike at unarmed and feeble wretches, such as those bare-headed monks; nor take pleasure in the cries of alarmed women and children.

And for the heap of vassals and slaves, the long-legged gangrels, that seek safety in immediate flight, guarding their heads, as it were, with their heels, too noble a death were it for such to die beneath the warlike weapon of Askew. Enough for such dastardly hildings, whose swords, if they have any, are nailed to their sheaths, to be bound to the stake, and perish by the axe or arrow of the vardhalldsmadr (5). But, for the destruction of yon old abbey, and the seizure of the wealth of the city, I well know that it is commanded by our religion to raze the temples of their false gods; and that the just rights of war entitle us to capture their females and treasure. Enough now of the past,—let us consider what is meet for present counsel. And first, as to the division of the spoil. Uctebrand, more wine,—fill full! I have caused the chief part of the treasure yet found to be borne hither. Here is the crucibolum, or favorite drinking-bowl, of King Burrhed, a present from the Frankish monarch, Charles the Bald, as our friend, Ceolwulf, 'by his beard,' assures us, adding (the ingrate!) that he has often drunk deep of the perfumed wines of Gascony from its ample depths. It is formed of the horn of the bison, or waldochse, and engraved with curious devices. Its stem is of molten silver, and the rim and feet are of chased gold. This shall be my first choice. Now, Oskitul, take that which best liketh you."

"By the crooked spite of the Dwargs (6)," replied

the latter, with a ferocious grin, "I would we had the crown of the slinking Burrhed, with his old, grim, hated head in it. But, as we have not, I will take this massive gold chain and jewelled 'Dragon' (7), with the casket of embossed silver that contains them."

"Thy choice is good, kinsman," observed Askew; "they are the same ornaments that were presented to the late king by his royal father-in-law, Ethelwulf, on his marriage at the abbey of Chippenham, as our trusty adviser, Ceolwulf, still pledging himself 'by his beard,' (though he has no more beard than a monk) further informs me. What choosest thou, Amwynd?" next demanded the chief king.

"Even this golden orca (8)," exclaimed the addressed party, with a laugh of exultation; "by its mighty size and swelling appearance, I should deem that it had belonged to no less a wight than the round old prior of yonder monastery. Gothrun, I would that thy axe had spared him. By the cock of the Æsir (9), he should now have danced a sprightlier measure than ever he stepped among his favorite nuns, when they revelled in secret with the blood of the Profentsæ grape. Thunder of Thor! I would have made him skip like a hen on a hot griddle!"

Thus did they parcel forth the varied booty, dividing, in equal quantities, the immense hoard of gold and silver, which had been collected from the palace, monastery, and chief private dwellings of the un-

fortunate city, through the torture of those who were privy to its concealment.

"Let us now distribute the women," said Amwynd; "out of sixty female captives (the number reserved by agreement before the sacking of the town), I have caused twenty of the youngest and most beautiful to be brought hither for division amongst ourselves. By the glories of Asgard (10), there are amongst them forms that shew like the rainbow in a sky of storm. Their lovely eyes may now be dim with weeping; but anon, they shall dart forth glances as bright and bewildering as the meteor cloud-fires of the north (11). Old 'Burly-brand' himself" (thus he designated the grisly and malevolent Gothrun). "shall swear, 'by the honors of his blood,' that there is no gold like the ringlets—no silver like the rounded treasures of snowy lustre, of which these daughters of the white-cliffed isle may boast!—Haste, fellows, bid Skjoldborg bring hither the female captives. Cup-bearer, fill high!—Now, thou sable son of shadow! (addressing Gothrun, with a smile of scornful glee,) we will see whether, old as thou art, the soft blue eyes of these western witches cannot cast a beamy circle around thy heart of darkness!"

"The sight of a fair two-edged sword would sooner move it," replied the fierce warrior; "being of flint, it is steel alone that may draw sparks from it. Give me thy cream-coloured stallion, with the swanlike neck and the auburn mane, and its crimson furniture,

and thou shalt have my share, past, present, and to come, in all these 'rainbows' and 'cloud-fires,' as thou hast aptly enough termed them, by way of comparison."

"Agreed, thou man of midnight! Were it Sleipner himself, the eight-legged steed of Odin, thou shouldst have him at the same price!"

The clash of their scaly steel-jointed gauntlets, as palm met palm, announced the compact; when Oskitul, to complete the formality, added the testimony of separating their hands by the interposition of the chape-end of his sheathed dudgeon.

"Enough of this," impatiently remarked Askew; "Algar! bid the officers lead before us the female captives, and direct Ulfr and the other chamberlains to secure, in separate places, within the vaults beneath, the shares of myself and brethren in last night's spoils."

In a few minutes the costly valuables, coin and bullion, were removed, and the unfortunate prisoners conducted into the presence of the barbarian conquerors.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE "NORTHERN CHRONICLES."—EXTRACTS CONTINUED: LOTS ARE CAST FOR THE MORE BEAUTIFUL OF THE FEMALE CAPTIVES.—KING ASKEW'S GENEROSITY TO THOSE WHO FALL TO HIS SHARE.

CHAM. There will be
The *beauty* of this kingdom, I 'll assure you.
King Henry VIII., Act i. sc. 3.

'Tis thine whate'er the warrior's breast inflames,
The golden spoil, and thine the *lovely dames.*
POPE'S HOMER'S *Iliad.*

Their downcast eyes fix'd on the silent ground,
Their dress neglected, and unbound their hair,
Each seemed the dying image of despair.
GARTH.

IT was a scene that might have moved a right-stony heart to ruth,—yea, even the hearts of all but those stern haters of the Christian faith, when the fair and lovely matrons, and the more youthful maidens of Mercia's noblest families, cast themselves, in floods of tears, and with dishevelled tresses and disordered raiment, at the feet of those unrelenting captors; and, in every accent of the deepest woe, besought them to allow their release. One sued for restoration to an aged and despairing sire; another, to a wounded

or dying husband; while a third pleaded her religious vows, or betrothment to a royal or noble lover of some nation in alliance with the "Host" (12).

"War not with women, most illustrious Kings," passionately exclaimed one exquisitely-beautiful damsel—her snowy arms clasped and upraised in the graceful attitude of fervent entreaty,—"our tender arms are unable to wield the instruments of battle; we trust our defence to the honour and clemency of the brave. Oh, be jealous of your fame as heroes, great chiefs, and let it suffice, that, by the noble right of conquest, ye possess our habitations, our wealth, nay, our very country; nor seek to cast an indissoluble stain on the only possession which, as females, we retain—the reputation and consciousness of an unviolated chastity. We are in your power, and in that circumstance let us put our chief trust. We appeal to you, not as to men, but as to heroes, beseeching you to be true to your own glory. We pray not more for our own honour, than for yours. You have conquered those to whom we looked for protection, but to whom, alas, we looked in vain. Lo! to yourselves, their victors, do we now appeal. And would you sully the brightness of your triumph by aggravating the wrongs which we have already suffered, through the irresolution, or improvidence, of our late rulers? Oh, if needs be, conquer yourselves—resist and overcome the desire to do us evil. Protect us, also, from the violence of others."

"Peace—peace! you plead in vain," interrupted Halfdene, rising abruptly from his seat, and seizing his helm and ategar with an air of impatience; "our time may not be wasted with your fruitless complainings. Henceforth, ye are of our people. If ye have been deprived of one country, ye have gained another. If ye have lost husbands, we will find those who will be unto you as such; and if ye have been bereaved of lovers, there will be doubtless opportunities enow of supplying their places. To those who plead religious vows we answer, that they shall have the benefit of twelve gods, where they had but one before. Enough: ye have but to bow to your fate, and the storm will pass over you."

"Fortune goeth ever as she must! as sayeth that doughty champion, 'Arm-of-Iron,'" observed Amwynd; "let her, therefore, wheel as she may!"

Amid the general outbreak of lamentation that followed, the iron-souled warriors of the North proceeded to select, by rotation, the various objects of their choice; Amwynd, as by agreement, receiving those due to King Gothrun, whose share he therefore regulated, as well as his own. They deliberately remarked on the beauties of each unfortunate prisoner, as if their discourse appertained rather to the four-footed inmates of their stables, than to the fairest and most illustrious representatives of the ancient nobility of Mercia. The high-thoughted Askew alone claimed his portion of the beautiful booty in silence, and with

a respectful modesty of demeanour. As soon as the division was over, he privily gave liberty to the four lovely women that had fallen to his lot (amongst whom was the eloquent petitioner), and sent them, with a large attendance, and in a manner answerable to their estate, to the castle of Tamaweorthig, whither they desired to be conducted as to a place of intermediate safety, till their future destination should be ascertained. Their less fortunate companions were then hurried back to their temporary prison in the Bowyer Tower, there to remain till such time as their merciless possessors should determine their exorbitant ransom, or more probable dishonour. The royal chiefs next proceeded to the despatch of other affairs, when an incident occurred which will be related in the ensuing chapter.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE "NORTHERN CHRONICLES."—EXTRACTS CONTINUED: DETECTION OF THEFT AMONG THE ROYAL FOLLOWERS, AND CONVICTION OF THE ACCUSED.—KING ASKEW AGAIN REBUKES THE SANGUINARY SPIRIT OF HIS COLLEAGUES.—QUARREL BETWEEN KINGS GOTHRUN AND AMWYND.—RECONCILIATION.—BUMBUR THE JESTER'S SONG—"THE MONKS OF REPAND N" (REPTON).

KENT. My lord, if you will give me leave, I will
Tread this unbolted victim into mortar.

King Lear, Act ii. sc. 3.

KENT. That such a slave as this should wear a sword,
Who wears no honesty.

Ibid.

CORN. Speak yet, how grew your quarrel?

Ibid.

A LOUD disturbance was now heard in the adjoining chamber, and presently it was announced that Bilfrith, one of the huscarls, or domestic troops, of King Askew, had been detected by Ælfmor, the banner-bearer, or marshal, in the act of concealing a gold cup belonging to that monarch, with the intention of purloining it; while, on searching his person, it was discovered that a golden sheath, a diamond bulla (13), and other valuables, the property of Kings Oskitul,

Gothrun, and Amwynd, were secreted with the like design. At the next moment, the culprit was violently forced into the apartment; his sagum (14) torn into shreds through the over-eager zeal of the enraged members of the household, on whom suspicion might have fallen through the villany of their fellow. The dignitaries of King Askew's court, namely, the Stallere, Chamberlain, Dish-Thane, Steward, and Chief-Smith (15), also entered, surrounded by a crowd of writhing, struggling, stamping attendants, all vociferous in threats and maledictions on the wretched offender.

"Reverse his feet!" (16) shouted one.

"Cleave him from the scalp to the twist!" roared another.

"Whip his skin off!" cried a third.

"Make him cut the 'Spread-Eagle!'" (17) hallooed six or seven other voices at once, with horrible coincidence of tone and articulation.

Every eye gleamed with vindictive fury—every weapon was convulsively grasped.

The delinquent now stood exposed, and the charge was declared, and proved against him. An ashen paleness overspread his cheek, and he wept bitterly at his dishonour or danger.

"A Northman never weeps—this fellow is the bastard of some Frankish nithing," observed Askew.

"Let him weep vinegar!" growled Ulfr, the Chamberlain, puckering his wrinkled, yellow face, till it

looked like the monstrous representation of a withered crab from Giant-land.

"Boil his heart in his own blood!" screamed Doldraskir, the Dish-Thane; his fat, round cheeks glowing with scarlet, as if to shew more impressively the sanguinary hue of his indignation.

"Flay him into rags!" bellowed the fiery 'Arm-of-Iron,'—his huge, massive frame heaving with resentment, till it threatened to rive the links of his war-shroud (18).

"Mince him into sand!" howled the wolf-hearted Amwynd, accompanying the suggestion with a shrill laugh, that sounded like an eddying gust of wind in a ruined temple at midnight.

"Batter him into flour!" thundered forth the grisly Gothrun, while a host of shadows gathered, like the gloom of an approaching tornado, over his sullen brow.

"Pestilence and blood!" shrieked the ferocious Oskitul, who had hitherto sat biting the helve of his broad-axe, by way of prelude to an outbreak of the turbulent emotions of his wrath; "why delay we one moment in dealing with the ravenous porpoise? By the host of Hela, I would twist his heart-strings round my thumb, in less time than the stroke of an oar-blade! Spirit of my father! I would smite off his head in the turn of an hour-glass!" and his eyes lightened, like those of a tiger, as he spoke.

"Prisoner," calmly interrogated Askew, "what

hast thou to say why present death should not be executed upon thee—why thy body should not swing from the window of the chamber wherein thy offence was committed?"

"Nothing!" replied the unhappy criminal; "I deserve my fate and am prepared to meet it. But, noble chief, as I deeply repent, and would make atonement for my misdeed, let me now make known to thee, that Ælfmor, thy banner-bearer, who discovered and gave notice of my transgression; and who, with fiercer eagerness than others, joined in the cry of—'Reverse his feet!—Make him cut the 'Spread Eagle!' was privily seen by me to hide within his tunic, an arm-ring (19) of gold, and to thrust a chalice of silver, full of jewels, into one of the sacks that had just been emptied. I pray you, therefore, mighty King, that as he set me the evil example—he, whom thou hadst trusted and preferred to honour,—so thou wilt suffer him to share with me the punishment, of which he is more deserving than myself."

"Can this, indeed, be true?" enquired Askew, addressing the impeached party, while a loud burst of indignation, mingled with expressions of doubt and surprise, proceeded from the excited auditory.

"Alas! I own my crime," faintly stammered the abject and trembling wretch; and, at the next instant, the secreted arm-ring was torn from his tunic.

For several minutes the confusion and tumultuous

outcries of judgment against him drowned the continuation of his reply. When silence was partially restored, the miserable offender, now on his knees, and with arms stretched forth as a petitioner, implored the assembled monarchs to spare his life. "Souls in bliss!" he pathetically added, "pray for me!"

"Go, prick the moon!" cried Gothrun, with a peculiar and sinister smile.

"Hence, and be dead!" vociferated Oskitul, striking the table with his gauntleted fist, till the chalices leapt up at the shock.

"Dead as a Bauta-stone!" (20) added Amwynd, with a merry laugh.

"And choose the old serpent, Nidhöggur, for a corpse-bearer!" squeaked Bumbur, the jester (21), who thrust his head knowingly through a new-made rent in the tapestry-screen at the end of the apartment. A wildly-savage explosion of merriment hailed this latter proceeding.

"Ha, ha! ho, he!" tauntingly laughed the grotesque-looking mime, with a shrill, sing-song sort of expression, "thou shalt have a funeral song to the Christian tune of the 'Devil in the sack!'" Another fierce demonstration shook the walls and roof.

"If I must hang," resumed the despairing petitioner, with a look of earnest appeal towards the presiding monarch, while the perspiration dropped from his brow like water, "be pleased to order, noble King,

that one of my veins be opened, lest, dying a bloodless death, I pass not through the gate of the Valhalla" (22).

"Whip him with wire!" facetiously suggested Amwynd.

"Let him have a bath of red wine of his own brewing!" cried the Jester.

"By the fiery cock of the Trölds!" roared Oskitul, "he should have blood enough for the asking, if I had the will of him. I would make his traitorly carcase a riddle in a few turns of the hand."

"Split him from the crown to the fork, and hang him in halves!" called out the Jester, again poking his head through the opening of the screen. A loud burst of exulting yells, and savage laughter, applauded this derisive recommendation.

The accused, regaining his self-possession, gazed around him with an expression of indifference, not unmixed with contempt.

"Hast thou aught else to urge in the way of favour?" demanded Askew, when the tumult had somewhat abated. "Thou hast been a brave man, Ælfmor, and I would shew thee some pity. Speak quickly!" An accent of kindness mingled with the solemn expression of his address, and communicated its impression to the feelings of the party accosted, as well as to those of the more humane of the assembly.

"I have," replied the transgressor; "if it might be so, I would be buried as a soldier, and with my

head laid towards that dear north (23) which I never more shall behold!" His features became flushed, and a tear escaped from his swollen eyelid. For the first time there was an interval of silence in that crowded hall.

"Thy wishes are granted. Vidric and Ulfnath, lead your prisoner forth to death! And may Odin pardon his crime!"

"*I* robbed but one—*thou* robbest thousands!" slowly and steadily remarked Ælfmor, folding his arms over his breast with an air of resignation to his fate. "Which, then, is the greater criminal?"

"Ha! ha! 'The devil is God's ape,' as the folks say in Lindesey," quoth the Jester, and he made up a ludicrous face of mock solemnity.

"By the war-club of Odin," exclaimed the aroused king, abruptly wrapping his mantle around his gigantic form, while he rose from his elevated seat; his dragon-crested helm with its black eagle plumes almost touching the vaulted ceiling, "thou bearest a bold heart to ask *me* that question. But, as thou art about to die, I will not quarrel with thee. If *my* acts are evil, they are committed under the authority and direction of a war-council, and are rather those of a people than of an individual. They are, however, sanctioned by the usage of war, as practised by all nations. *Thine* act was that of a petty, cunning pilferer, a betrayer of thy sworn trust, a degraded common thief."

"'*Larva diaboli,*' as the monks have it," said the Jester, with an edifying expression of grave judicial censure.

"Death on my tribe!" shouted the indignant Oskitul, "dares the base, coistrel slave to question the justice of his sentence?" His eye lightened with rage; his voice was that of the thunder, when it rolls over the boiling waves of the deep. At the next moment, stamping his iron heel, and striking the table with his clenched fist, he exclaimed,—"Thou vile, execrable mere-swine!" Here his utterance was impeded by the violence of his wrathful emotion; his nostrils gaped; he gnashed his teeth; the foam stood on his lip; and he panted for breath.

"Better 'mere-*swine*' than mere-*devil!*" coolly replied the undaunted Ælfmor.

"Hah! by cocksbones, it will rain curses by-and-bye," quoth the Jester, speaking aside.

"By the honours of my blood," said King Gothrun, grasping his beard with a hurried gesture, "this is too much." He spoke in a low, subdued tone, which, however, sufficiently evinced the rage that inflamed him.

"Miscreant of Hela!" at length broke forth the furious Oskitul; "may the lightnings of Thor blast me, but thy death shall be on the spot where thou standest. Aye, by the reek of Ragnarök (24), thou shalt be 'black-buried' (25) in the turn of an hour-glass!" He hurled his ategar at the scornfully-

smiling prisoner, who, stooping with dexterous agility, allowed the angry missile to pass harmlessly over his head, and to fix itself, with a quivering motion, in the wall beyond.

"A narrow miss, by the eagle-crest of Radegast!" (26) cried Askew; "one inch lower, and the prisoner's head had been cleft like an apple by the knife of a schoolboy. Now mayest thou, noble Oskitul, forgive the dogged speech of a condemned man, and join thy entreaty to his for the mitigation of his doom."

"If I do, may the words choke me!" responded the incensed leader; and his projecting and strained eye-balls gleamed luridly as he spoke.

"Kneel to him, Ælfmor, and implore him to make suit to me in your favour."

"No!" was the immediate answer, uttered with cold disdain. "I would sooner bite off my tongue and spit it in his loathly face. *Mercy* from HIM! the blood-sucking, beast-like tyrant! May Nifleim be his portion!"

"Moon and stars!" groaned Oskitul, setting his teeth, and rushing towards the prisoner; "I will tear out his tongue through the back of his neck!"

At this moment, the weapon of each royal chief was also raised; while exclamations of wrath and vengeance echoed from side to side.

"Stay, brethren, my commands must be obeyed," interposed the presiding monarch, with an expression of stern resolution; while his mien seemed to dilate

with an added dignity, that awed the contending and irritated chieftains into an immediate acquiescence in his purpose. "The prisoners are both brave men, and the offence is the first which they have committed. These reasons urge me to spare their lives. Vard-halldsmadr, lead Bilfrith to the healsfang, or neck-catch, and give him as many strokes, with a knotted switch, as there be men in his squadron, that each may take example by his disgrace. And, for Ælfinor, he is degraded for ever from his office of banner-man, and condemned to serve as groom-of-the-stirrup, till King Oskitul request his release from punishment. Let him learn how ill a thing it is to betray trust, or question the just authority of those above him."

"Better death than stripes," cried Bilfrith, "death in the presence of my lord and leader! I am no bastard of a Frank. Be this the token—*I die* LAUGHING!" At the same instant, he tore a dagger from the baldrick of the nearest huscarl, and, ere an arm could have arrested his purpose, dashed it twice, up to the very hilt, through his breast. "The dice have done this," he added, "but for my debt to 'Blue-tooth Bear,' I had not wronged a noble master! Farewell, princes, farewell, comrades! I see—I see one of the Valkyriar—the bright-eyed maid waves a cup—a cup of gold—foaming with the amber mead—and she cries—'Haste thee, my kiss shall be sweet on thy lips!'—Hah! my blood freezes—my brain burns: ha! ha! ha! I die—but *I die* LAUGHING!"

A deluge of blood accompanied his unnatural mirth, as he fell heavily backwards, and at the next moment lay a breathless and pallid corpse.

"Poor Bilfrith!" now exclaimed many a rude voice. "He was always in the heart of the battle," said one, "and the first to flesh his weapon. We used to call him the 'Flaming Firebrand,' but we shall call him so no more!" "He was a brave fellow," said another, "he would attack with two swords at once, holding the reins in his mouth. He would set his horse at full gallop, and while at the full pitch of his speed, jump off, run after him, and mount him again without stopping!" "I have seen him drop," said a third, "from the head of a tower into the paved court beneath, and run at full speed along the narrow ridges of roofs, with no other guide than the fitful flames of the adjoining houses."

"And many a time," said a fourth, "has he walked along the oars of a boat in rapid motion."

"He would throw three swords up into the air," added a fifth, "and catch them one after another by the hilt, as they successively fell, in a sort of whirling circle."

"Poor Bilfrith!" re-echoed fifty voices.

"'The Flaming Firebrand' is at last extinguished!"

"'Fortune goeth ever as she must!'" observed King Anlwynd. "Ælfmor, I suppose thy destiny decrees thee a longer date. Thou preferest disgrace to death —yet when was this the choice of the Northman?"

Ælfmor spoke not, but in his heart he answered and said,—"I live for the Northman's dearest passion—REVENGE!" He then retired; while the rest, catching up the body, followed the surviving delinquent with renewed cries of hate and derision; and the monarchs were once more alone.

"And now, brethren," resumed Askew, with a conciliating smile, "the breakfast-board awaits us. I have ordered a boar's-chine, the larded haunch of a fat buck, and a dish of cranes, for our morning's repast. Skallagrim, see that there be spices enow in the pigment. My friends, ye have learned, I trust, a lesson of mercy; and the remembrance thereof should give you an appetite for the approaching meal. Hark—the trumpets already sound, and Algar approaches to marshal us the way."

"Come, old 'Flint-and-steel,'" playfully exclaimed Amwynd, addressing the dark-visaged and fierce Gothrun, "we will drink, ere the ream be off the ale-stoup, to the broad, crimson-tied, auburn tail of thy noble cream-coloured, swan-necked jennet (27), 'Cacafuego.' Truly, the name was well chosen for a steed of thy warlike mount."

"Nor will we forget," replied the ancient warrior, with a smile that shewed like a glimmer of moonlight through a winter fog, "that to our second cup belongs the toast of a *head*, instead of a *tail*."

"Of Mímer (28), or Serimner (29), or of a dragon, a giant, or a Saracen?" sneeringly interrupted Am-

wynd, who had now, with the other monarchs, reached the adjoining chamber, where the repast was served. "Or of a reverend *donkey?*" he added, in a subdued tone.

"Of neither," said Gothrun; "but the *head* of a 'sweet girl, beautiful as Freia herself.' Know you where such an one is to be found, kinsman?" and the aged monarch gave a grim, ironical look askance at the object of his supposed jest.

"Ha! ha! ha! A dim candle is better than no light," muttered the Jester, with a wink to Amwynd.

"Ay, by the five *heads* of Porevith (30), Gothrun," replied the startled youth, somewhat checked in his wanton humour by the significantly-solemn tone in which the unexpected allusion was introduced; "but, just now, I would rather gaze on a boar's-*head*, bedecked with garlands, and lying in a stately charger." He gnawed his lip, while he affected to smile.

"'With hair dark as the thunder-cloud of evening,'" pursued the other monarch, deliberately, in a wildly hollow tone, and laying a marked emphasis on every word in succession.

"You have it in snaps and parcels—by small and small," quoth the Jester, with a nod, followed by a knowing shake of the head. "He feeds you like an ape, with a bit and a knock."

Amwynd gazed at Gothrun, with an expression that might half seem to deprecate, half defy, his provoking, yet half-concealed sneers.

"The trumpets drown thy croak, old 'Surly-burly,'" said he, impatiently; "see, the smoking haunch and the foaming beaker send forth their challenge to enjoyment. The boar's-*head* seems purposely to have responded to my appeal, and the high-seasoned cranes, ornamented with a network of gold, speak gaily to the eye and palate."

King Gothrun's rugged features wore a look of the most tormenting malice, and the hand of Amwynd instinctively clutched the hilt of his falchion. Smothering his impatience, however, he added, in a tone of quiet expostulation,—

"Tush, man; hang up thy graveyard humour with thy cloak. Mark you not those silvery boughs of hawthorn that garnish the rugged trophies of war on yonder wall? Do they speak to us of the gloom of winter, or of the foggy skies of autumn? Say, thou dingy moralist, what doth their fresh fair bloom remind thee of?"

"'A brow white as the snows of Hecla,'" hoarsely murmured Gothrun, with a sepulchral sort of smile, or rather grin.

"Better and better still, like sour ale in summer," said the Jester, parenthetically.

"Blood and fire!" snorted out the now wrathful Amwynd; "draw, Gothrun, and defend thy own jowl, or I will lay it on the trencher before me."

"Peace—put up thy steel, mad-headed boy," interposed Askew, with a calm, yet terrible sternness.

"The falcon is not wise that turneth back its feathers in the presence of the eagle." Then, relaxing the momentary severity of his look, he added, "Come, my friends, let us be seated. Tölf and Starkadder, fill round the largest cups with the purple Profentsæ (31). We will drink a brimming wassail to the health of the stout-hearted Gradinego and his fair bride, the daughter of the brave Eadulf! Come, friends, fill, fill, I say. Now, Bumbur, give us thy newest song."

"New songs," replied Bumbur, "are like fresh fish and strangers, they stink in three days; so thou shalt have one of as many hours old. 'Self do, self have.' It is one of my own making. 'Drawn wells are seldom dry.' Yet what says the ancient proverb? 'An old dog will learn no new trick.' 'Tis a lie, my masters. The old dog, Bumbur, hath more new tricks than a young ape. And here is one of them."

The Jester hastily equipped himself in a monk's gown, which, for the sake of effect, he contrived to button awry, and, drawing the cowl over his head, and brandishing a goblet in his right hand, he struck, with an easy grace and a sly expression of humour, into the following strain, the comic effect of which was heightened by the grotesque saltations with which he accompanied the chorus.

BUMBUR'S SONG—THE MONKS OF REPANDUN.

Let the boar's-head glad smoke on the garlanded dish,
Mid the wide varied dainties of flesh, fowl and fish;
Pour the ale's yellow tide from the butt's ample store,
Till each big-bellied flagon gush foamingly o'er:
Let the haunch of the red-deer, the round of the ox,
Yield, by turns, their prime juice, with the fat of our flocks:
While plump pullets and capons, choice sauces and gravies,
Ask a place for John Cóc (32), in our credos and avès:
Then rich puddings and flap-jacks, pies, custards, and fruits,
With such kick-shaws besides as the season best suits:
And, to crown the fair feast, magnum flasks of old wine,
Drawn from cellars well stocked by the Gasconie vine!

CHORUS.

Drink, brothers, drink—
Drink while you can:
They are fools who don't think
That a monk 's but a man!

"Long life to the Pope?"—Ah, well said, brother Paul;
Here 's "Long life to the Pope, and the cardinals all!"
While his Holiness keeps up his power and state,
There 's no fear of our coffers declining in weight,
Unless—ill betide us—those land-leaping Danes,
Gothrun, Oskitul, Amwynd, should ravage our plains!
Again fill your cups—ay, fill up to the brim;
And I'll give you a toast, that shall make your hearts swim:
Here 's "Good luck to Old Hornie, our best friend alive,
And full oft may he send us fresh virgins to shrive!"
While there 's deer i' the forest, or flask i' the cellar,
We'll bow to no idol but—fœmina bella!

CHORUS.

Drink, brothers, drink—
What saith the Psalmist?
"Wine gladdeth the heart of man!"
'Zooks, then, what harm is 't?

Oh, the nuns of Repandún might Adam entice,
From the charms of his Eve, and his dear Paradise;
Lead old David to think nought of Bathsheba's grace,
And tempt even Joseph to meet their embrace!
For, though shorn by the Bishop, (the Deuse take those shears,
That could cut off such ringlets instead of his ears!)
And, though clad in an ill-fitting gown of rude serge,
While from coarse, shapeless hood doth the skull-cap emerge,
Yet nature bids beauty triumphant still prove,
And midnight soft echoes the challenge of love!
Ah, too swiftly the hours of enjoyment decay,
And we yield each fond rapture with morn's blushing ray.

CHORUS.

Drink, brothers, drink—
Pass round the toast:
"Here's to Cupid's sly wink,
And the girl we love most!"

The watchman, at midnight, who passes our walls,
Hears the mass high-ascending, and zealously falls
On his knee, with a prayer for the heaven-souled throng
Who through night's solemn hours their devotion prolong.
Lord! how little he thinks that our skill has invented
A fifty-tubed instrument—each part so centred
In one, did you chant through its mouth-piece, you'd say
That fifty full voices had joined in the lay!
Thus, each night the lone brother, whose watch has come round
Pours his strains through that channel of multiplied sound;
While at banquet, or wassail, or linked with the lasses,
Each gay son of Austin his time sweetly passes!

CHORUS.

Drink, brothers, drink—
"A plague on all trouble!"
Till the lamps seem to wink,
And the bowl to grow double!

And thus 'tis in life, could we peep through the screen,
Few are like what they promise, when thoroughly seen;

For preaching and practice but seldom accord,
And he who says least will most oft keep his word.
The lawyer is sorry that folks won't agree,
He pities his client, and pockets his fee!
The doctor his huge wig in sympathy shakes,
While he wishes, in heart, he could double your aches!
The parson he preaches 'gainst overgrown pelf,
Yet would give "crowns of glory" for riches himself:
And the judge, who each culprit so sternly regards,
Might change places, if actions should meet their rewards!

CHORUS.

Drink, brothers, drink—
Give dull care the glad slip;
While each goblet we clink
To the toast—"Woman's lip!"

See the rusty old burgher, so grave and precise,
With a tongue ever railing at pleasure and vice,
First at mass, last at complin, profuse in his alms,
If he read—'tis the Text-book(33); or sing—'tis the Psalms (34).
Yet peep 'neath the curtain—uplift the sly mask,
He his girl sees in private, and hugs close the flask!
He will cog, cheat, and lie, swear through thick and through thin,
And still laugh at the fools he so deftly takes in;
Or, if folks, at the worst, should discover his play,
And the wench and the winecup be dragged into day,
Why, the pious soft-whisper, to drown all complaints,
"Oh, the devil hath such pleasure in tempting the Saints!"

CHORUS.

Drink, brothers, drink—
'Tis said—"Life 's a span!"
If so, we 've good reason
To drink while we can!

How is it that women who prate about "grace"
Are so lank in the limbs and so grim in the face?

Or so shapeless and cumbrous, from overgrown fat;
Their complexions as dingy as Beelzebub's cat?
So curst in their tempers, of scandal so full,
So frightful, so spiteful—so mumpishly dull?
Why, the reason is plain as the sun at noon-day,
(For you ne'er saw a pretty girl given that way!)
'Tis because, when they find that their wares won't go off,
They pretend at "things carnal" to snigger and scoff,
Raise their eyes in mock rapture, the heavens to scan,
When, God help 'em, they 'd jump o'er the moon for a man!

CHORUS.

Drink, brothers, drink—
Drink while you 're able;
Though the cups seem to "skip"
Like "young sheep" round the table!

Then a "Health to the Pope," and a "Health to the King;"
And a "Health to John Cóc"—the best cock i' the ring!
A "Health to our Ealdormen, Heretochs, Thanes;"
And a "Health (if they win!) to those rake-helly Danes!"
For should churches change masters, and saints lose their shrines,
We would still eat our bread 'neath the shade of our vines!
Yea, whate'er might betide, in this world of what-next?
We would stick to our sermon, if shorn of our text!
Then, though kings lie afield, worn with midnight alarm,
May the monks of Repandún couch softly and warm,
Yield to beauty their knee—still hobnob each glad toast,
And sing—"Hey for the noggin, the noggin and roast!"

CHORUS.

Drink, brothers, drink—
Life's but a jest:
And he 's still the wisest
Who plays the fool best (35)!

Ha ma la, ha ma là, ha ma la, ha ma la,
O la la, la la la, la la la, la!

At the conclusion of his song, Bumbur threw a grotesque summerset, and afterwards, making a long neck, imitated the boastful crow of a cock; a proceeding of his which invariably drew forth the laughter and applause it was intended to provoke.

"Then laughed the champions' festive ring,
Then great King *Askew* smiled,
Whilst back the echoing rafters fling
Plaudits more rude and wild."

CHAPTER XX.

THE "NORTHERN CHRONICLES."—EXTRACTS CONTINUED: THE EXILE AND DEATH OF KING BURRHED.—THE DANES REMAIN AT HREOPANDUN.—CEOLWULF, A LATE PERFIDIOUS OFFICER OF BURRHED, MADE KING.—DESOLATION OF HREOPANDUN.—THE PERSON AND CHARACTER OF CEOLWULF DESCRIBED.—HIS FRAUD AND CRUELTY EARLY DISCOVERED.—MURDER OF EADRIC, THE HALL-THANE.—FATE OF SIGFRED, THE STALLERE.

MACD. Bleed, bleed, poor country!
Great tyranny, lay thou thy basis sure,
Since goodness dares not check thee! wear thou thy wrongs,
Thy title is affeer'd.

Macbeth, Act iv. sc. 3.

BURRHED, deprived, in an hour of unguarded yet inevitable danger, of a throne which, for the space of two-and-twenty years, he had manfully defended against the violent encroachments of the Britons and the Danes, as well as from the more insidious attacks of internal faction, now experienced the fate of his late unhappy father (Bertulf, the preceding King of Mercia), being driven as an exile from his spacious dominions, while the saddening prospect of being exposed to the deepest privations of penury seemed included in his more unfortunate destiny. He fled, with

the miserable wreck of his fallen fortunes, to Rome, where, in a few days after his arrival, the welcome hand of death sealed his opportune release from the accumulated distresses that surrounded him; adding another instance to the signal manifestations of an overwatching and controlling Providence, through the mercy of whose timely ordination, the forlorn and hapless victim of a Heathen persecution was suddenly rescued from the scene of his unmerited suffering. He was buried in the English college, or school, erected by Ina, King of the West Saxons, in Rome.

The Danish forces, under the command of their several kings, remained at Hreopandún, till the end of the following winter. The wide realm of Mercia, the most fertile, wealthy, and considerable of the kingdoms of the Octarchy, was now completely in the power of the barbarian conquerors; yet, with a cunning that was often evinced by these predatory adventurers, they forbore to take upon themselves the ostensible character of its rulers, and looked out for some convenient agent, to whom they might nominally assign the royal authority (36). The policy of this proceeding (illustrating the old adage, 'the fox's skin pieces out the lion's hide,') had been shewn on a former occasion, wherein the Mercians had quietly submitted to the rule of an invader, on condition that they should still be governed by a deputy chosen from amongst themselves, who should continue to administer the recognized laws of the realm (37).

Ceolwulf, an officer of Burrhed's court, had treacherously corresponded with the Council of the Danish "Host," and pointed out to them the most advantageous period of attack on Mercia—namely, during the absence of the unsuspecting Burrhed, whom the renewed hostility of the Britons, on his western frontier, had withdrawn, with the chief of his army, from the central portion of the kingdom. This wily and unprincipled courtier they selected as a suitable tool for their purpose, and they conferred upon him the reputed sovereignty of Mercia, taking care that the real power of the government should remain in their own hands. They surrounded him with their spies: each responsible office of his household, as well as those of his council, being filled by the chiefs of their own party. A large body of huscarls, or Danish domestic troops, were selected to serve immediately around his person, as an apparent body-guard, but, in reality, to check any attempt he might afterwards form to render himself independent. Ceolwulf, who was a man of narrow capacity, although of intriguing disposition, saw not the cautionary net which was thus thrown around his future acts, but inwardly gratified himself with the idea that he should soon be able to cast aside the authority of those who had raised him to his present elevation. He swore fidelity to his new masters on the bracelet consecrated to Odin, as well as on the cross of the Christian,—forms of obligation which were held in equal contempt by this barbarian in impiety.

He engaged to pay an enormous tribute; to assist his masters, at all times, with his forces, when his co-operation should be necessary; and to restore the power confided to him, whenever required.

It was again evening, but a sky of tempest-cloud flung its dark and threatening shadow over the joyless landscape; while hollow-sounding gusts of wind rushed, with a wintry chillness, through the wild heap of ruins that constituted the greater part of the once splendid city. It might seem that the lowering gloom which spread above, was that of a widely-descending sable pall, destined, by some mysterious sympathy of nature, to cloak the sad remains of the unburied victims, that lay mingled with the broken masses of the still smoking buildings; and those mournfully-resounding gales might be deemed the voices of unseen spirits bewailing, in awful chorus, the lamentable fate of the fair city and its late joyous inhabitants.

The affecting words of the prophet Jeremiah might have been aptly applied to the desolation which reigned around. "How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces!" The effects of this violent invasion, comparable to that of the Assyrians against the land of Israel in old times, might have reminded the few unhappy monks and nuns who escaped the general slaughter, and who now ventured to gaze on the wreck of their late beautiful habita-

tion, of the sublime language of scripture, "Thou hast given us, O Lord, as sheep to be devoured, and hast scattered us among the heathen!"—"They have set fire upon thy holy places, and have burned the dwelling-place of thy name, even unto the ground."—"O God, the heathen are come into thy heritage, thy holy temple have they defiled."

Here might be seen the disconsolate father, searching for the mangled body of a beloved child; there, a pious offspring uniting their tears and groans, as the corse of a revered mother became apparent amid the desolate fragments of their late happy abode. "The stately turrets, high mounted walls, and the sacred altars, lay all tumbling together; all purpled with the broken and bloody quarters, and gored carcases, mixed as in a horrible wine-press. Neither were there any other sepulchres abroad, save the ruins of buildings, and the bowels of wild beasts and birds." Heavy columns of lurid smoke ascended, like the incense of some unholy sacrifice—their strange, unusual pallor being relieved, with a wildly-solemn effect, against the sombre shadow of the angry and scowling firmament. Huge masses of purplish-black cloud rose like giant mountains: their savage peaks tipped with the reddening glare of the descending sun. Their solid and towering aspect gave the idea of a vast spectral fortress erected in the hostile heavens; while the faint but heavy rolls of distant thunder seemed to mutter the signal of approaching wrath. For a moment or

two the sun, peering strugglingly through an interval of tawny-coloured ether, flung a ghastly gleam of livid light—a pale, copper-coloured glare, deepening by degrees into a gloomy red as before—across the dusky expanse; then sank with a hurried, and, it might seem, a shuddering farewell, leaving an added darkness to the appalling picture. Birds and beasts of prey—the fierce eagle, the dismal kite, the black raven, the greedy war-hawk, the grey wolf of the wold, the wild boar of the wood, and the savage bear of the heath—were now seen to flutter or prowl around, impatient for the coming moment when they should appease their craving appetite with the relics of human carnage—clamouring, with horrid delight, at the rare and unimpeded banquet of "white flesh," for "none shall fray them away!"

Such was the scene upon which the new-made monarch gazed, with a seemingly-contemplative eye, from an eastern window of the former Glyptotheca, or statue-gallery, of the Roman citadel,—a fortress so designated from its having been a work of that famous people, during their earlier occupation of the ancient city. Ceolwulf had not yet attained his thirty-seventh year; his countenance was mild and engaging, but there was a bold and restless expression in his dark-blue, piercing eyes, that ever and anon contradicted the seeming serenity of his fair and not unhandsome features. His stature was tall, and his person symmetrically formed; while his mien disclosed no incon-

siderable portion of grace and dignity. His hair, which was of the palest yellow, was bound up in a tuft on the crown by means of a golden hoop set with diamonds, and the remainder curled and fell down, at great length, upon his breast and shoulders. His voice, when undisturbed by passion, was femininely soft, but assumed a shrill and harsh expression, under the influence of resentment or discontent. His fair complexion, delicately-formed limbs, and the redundant display of his glossy and perfumed ringlets, had procured for him, in the warlike court of Burrhed, the unenvied appellation of the "Lady Soldier." The present attire of this now royal personage consisted of a loosely-worn cassock, composed of dark-blue silk, trimmed with very broad "gards or welts purfleet," * and set forth with orange, crimson, and white embroidery. His crimson hose were richly embroidered with white and silver ; while the decorated parts of his dress were plentifully garnished with the most costly pearls (38). A sagum, or cloak, of crimson silk, bordered with ermine, and profusely spangled with gold stars ; a hat adorned with white and crimson feathers ; and golden buskins, enriched with sparkling stones of varied brilliancy, and furnished with broad, richly chased spurs, also of gold, formed the remaining portion of his superb and strikingly-graceful costume, which was further enriched and dignified by the various ornamental appendages that completed

* Purfled.

his equipment. Amongst these were more conspicuous an emerald neck-chain, and bracelets of engraved gold; a jewelled girdle and dagger, and an elaborately studded and embroidered cross-belt, or baldrick, sustaining a sword of corresponding magnificence. It may be added that a diversity of gorgeous rings graced his small and elegantly-shaped hand; and fringed gloves, embroidered with pearls and silver filigree, presented no unmeet accompaniment to the splendid details already recited. Folding his arms with an air of haughty indifference, he surveyed for awhile the dismal spectacle of ruin, that frowned upon him from without; and which might well seem to accuse his reckless conscience of the desolation and misery that had been brought about by his cruel and perfidious designs.

The newly-created and exulting king next paced, with majestic stride and swelling port, the Armoury Chamber of the ancient edifice; and which was thenceforth to serve the purpose of a room of audience. He gazed admiringly on the rich chair of state, of tissued gold; and on the surrounding pillars, crowned with trophies of military honour, elaborately sculptured and gilt. The roof, ceiled with cedar, and decorated with shields and crowns, also sumptuously-carved and adorned with gilding, delighted his proudly-exploring eye. Eight great silver candlesticks, with virgin wax tapers, stood on the spacious tapestry-covered table; and on the cloth of state, suspended above the throned seat, or chair of ceremony

just mentioned, was a large, majestic scutcheon bearing the "Dragon" of Mercia, finely painted and gilt. Stools of tissued cloth of gold were dispersed through the apartment; the walls of which were embellished with tapestry and other hangings, silver mirrors, pictures, and a profusion of trophied banners, coats of mail, helmets, lances, and shields, that recorded some of the more signal achievements of Ethelbald the "Proud," and Offa, the "Terrible." As the new-made monarch connected this wide show of splendour with his own suddenly-elevated fortunes, his fancy revelled in delightful visions of approaching joy and magnificence. From the comparatively low rank of a lesser-thegn, and of a subordinate officer to the late king, he now saw himself suddenly raised, as it were, by the chance of a moment, to the paramount dignity in an ancient state! Was it, indeed, a dream, or did he tread that princely hall, as its future most illustrious occupant?

The question, if thought of, was soon answered. A crowd of fawning attendants vied with each other in an endeavour to testify the fullest veneration towards the new object of their servile homage. He had also to receive the hurried, yet ardent congratulations of such of the abject nobles as hoped to build up their broken fortunes by a seemingly-voluntary subjection to the new dynasty. At length, the officious crowd dispersed, and he was not unwillingly left to the meditations which this singular

change in his situation called forth. His thoughts found vent in occasional soliloquy, and might be thus recorded.—

"Old Umfreig, the heretoch, hath a young and fair wife, the daughter of an Italian mother,—with hair dark as the raven's wing, a cheek that is eloquent of the sunny South, and a bosom of swanlike grace and hue, which might tempt a whole synod of saints, in the twinkling of an eye-glance!—By the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys, I will not fail to remember it, when I next ride to Northweorthig (39). Report says that she is fond of the old dotard, her husband, who is a specimen of the warrior of the Egbert era, with more wounds than hairs, yet as fond of money as if he had never feasted on honour. She is said to be as proud as she is beautiful;—so much the better—the nobler will be my triumph!—By the scourge of old Guthlac, her lovely fingers, white as they may be, shall not scorn to unbind the miry bandage from my sandal, if she bow not, with towardly smiles, when I alight at her gate!—Her husband is a jealous cankered knave, with an affectation of slender means, while it is well known that his very cellars are gorged with hoarded ingots and sacks of coin!—By the bed of the brood-dragon, I will strip his miserly carcass as bare as a bird's tail!—He shall smoke on the gridiron of the vardhalldsmadr, if he disgorge not freely the best half of his hidden treasure! The hoary Earl, Eadulf, another of the old Egbert

and Ethelwulf breed of heroes, hath a lovely daughter,—a fair-haired, rosy-cheeked creature, just bursting into womanhood;—with lips as bright and pulpy as the scarlet cherry, and eyes of softest azure, with that indescribably-sweet melting expression, whose very recollection thrills through the heart and nerves! She, too, shall be mine!—By the rood, I will revel in all that can make life a dream of unlimited enjoyment!—Gold and beauty! how will I hug you by turns, to my embrace!—Yes, the richest and the fairest shall soon learn that the dove hath given place to the hawk on the sceptre of Mercia!—What, hoa, there! I am as dry as a kex;—cupbearer, fill me a cup of the red Profentsæ—Of a verity, the mitre and the cowl shall love me as the devil loves holy water! They shall keep 'Black Lent' every year, and it shall last them a twelvemonth. I will make fish-broth serve them for holidays!—There shall be no revelling but within the bannered halls of the 'Dragon.'—There the feast shall flow with unsparing plenty; the sweet sounds of the minstrel harp shall rise to the shielded roof; my Roman mirrors shall give back the glowing forms of youthful beauty; and my gilded beds shall bear on their rich hangings the story of my loves and pastimes!—My stalls shall be thronged with noble Barbary steeds; my Norwegian falcons — rascally slave!" he exclaimed, as Eadric, a favourite attendant of the late king, entered, with dejected and sullen aspect, and presented the ordered wine; "why

bringest thou my drink in a cup like this? Fire and brimstone! is there no golden or jewelled goblet, in this ancient and royal citadel, more meet for the lips of a King?" and he dashed the fine old Roman cup of matchless purple crystal, and of inestimable value, on the floor. "Froth and scum!" he continued, stamping violently with his spurred heel on the tesselated pavement, "bid the Chamberlain himself attend me! A mis-shapen dwarf like thee, is more fit to act the scullion, than to enter the presence of a throned monarch. Out, scab! hence—avoid!" He turned aside, at the next instant, with a gesture intended to signify unutterable contempt.

"I have attended, for twenty years, a king, the son of a king," replied the stout and resolute retainer, "and never till now was evil word my portion. An hide (40) of land, and one hundred swine, have I earned through faithful service. I am a free-man, and list to yield no suit, where I cannot also shew respect! A 'mis-shapen dwarf' though I be, I am neither the vassal of a pirate, nor the 'rascally slave' of a pirate's vassal!" A feeling of sturdy and becoming pride swelled the utterance of the old and faithful domestic; while a tear of solemn pity for the wrongs of his late master bedewed his withered, but now momentarily-reddened, cheek.

"Hah! by the bones of old Badeges," muttered the incensed Ceolwulf, in a tone of hurried excitement that betrayed the coming storm, "I did not think that

blood would so soon have marked my reign!" Then, turning suddenly round, and steadfastly eyeing the unabashed hall-thane, who had now drawn himself up to his full height, with an air of conscious worth and independence, as though he feared not the outbreak of the king's imperious wrath, the monarch added, in a dry, cutting tone—"Thou art a 'free-man,' truly; and a landed wight to boot: yea, and one who hath wit and hardiness enow beside. I know thee well, and thou shalt know me better: ay, by Saint Peter, the prince of the apostles, and vicar of Christ, thou shalt know me, and that at once, for a generous benefactor! I will give thee, worthy franklin, more land than thou shouldst be able to plough, though thou hadst a thousand oxen in lieu of thy hundred swine! I will give thee—yea, and that immediately,"—his eye emitted a lurid flash as he spoke—"four feet of ground by two, for a grave! Speed thee, dwarf, and take possession! 'Dabo, Trado (41)!'" He drew his dagger at the next instant, and leaping forward, with a laugh of derision, plunged it directly through the heart of the unfortunate attendant. A convulsive start, a short, subdued groan, a glance of quick reproach, a shudder of indescribable anguish and horror, and the reeling body sank lifeless at his feet.

"By hell or Nifleim (for I believe in one as much as in the other), I would that every ill-wisher I have, in the new world of Hreopandún, were as quietly dispatched as this foolish carrion!" Then, having wiped

the stained and reeking blade on the scarf of the slain, he returned it to its scabbard with a careless smile, striking the half-sheathed weapon gaily on the hilt to drive it home. Having adjusted his belt with an air of graceful haughtiness, he again paced the wide and shadowy chamber; while the substance and sequence of his thoughts might thus be traced.

"Old Eadulf is sullen and suspicious, and it will require all the eloquence of Cariberta to obtain his daughter as an attendant of honour. Selethytha, Beage, and Eadburh, the youthful daughters of Æthelwyn (comparable with the three graces of old classic writ!); Elfhild, the lovely grandchild of the aged Sigeric (exceeding the Psyche of the poets, and a fit bride for Mars himself!); and other beautiful girls will I select and place near the person of my unsuspecting queen; and with whose varied and contrasting charms, as opportunity may best offer, will I solace myself, when fatigued with the cumbrous ceremonials of state! Yes, I will make free acquaintance with my subjects' relations *on the spindle side!* I will bathe in the rich bloom of girlhood's beauty!—The freshest ripeness of womanhood shall yield itself a virgin sacrifice to my couch! My lovely Cariberta may in time grow jealous; but she, too, must learn that King Ceolwulf (by my beard, it hath a marvellously fair sound!) hath no other rule of action than his own high will!" It may be here remarked, that though the monarch swore by his "beard," yet he did

so only in the manner in which a shrew speaks of her "goodness," the thing cited or appealed to being a *non ens*, or a *nemo scit*, existing solely in the imagination or words of the speaker.

Sigfred, one of the royal ministri, or servitors, now entered, and having bowed with an air of reverent humility, decorously stood aside, till it should suit the king's exalted leisure to notice him.

"His master's old clothes make him proud enough," thought Sigfred; "marry, a pair of calf-skin gloves (42) of four-pence a-pair were fitter than those he wears." But he looked modestly down, and seemed as if he was overcome with the sight of so much majesty.

"Thou comest welcomely, Sigfred," said the monarch, with an eager smile, "if thy mission hath been fully accomplished. Say, hast thou captured and brought hither the four beautiful and noble ladies whom King Askew had released and sent, with a strong guard, to the castle of Tamaweorthig? If thou hast failed, the devil rock me, but the heads of thyself and fellows shall speedily pay the forfeit. If thou hast succeeded, an hide of land, with one hundred swine, (late belonging to Eadric, the hall-thane, who will never want land or swine more,) shall be thy reward."

"May it please your highness," replied the obsequious myrmidon, with a deeper obeisance than before; "they are safely lodged, as you directed, in the Peacock chamber of the Broad-arrow tower. Stark drunk

with lust and pride!" he added, addressing himself, internally.

"'Tis well," observed Ceolwulf, his cheek flushed with joyous satisfaction, and his eye brightening through the same sensations of pleasurable emotion; "thou hast used apt diligence, and mayst be trusted in greater matters. But say, didst thou, with thy ambushed followers, slay the whole of the Danish convoy, to prevent discovery of the captor? Hath every man perished?"

"Every man, my lord—that is, please your grace." The mistake, supposing it to have been one, was rectified with a trembling haste, and a blush of self-accusing shame. "Coarse list turned into rich fringe," were, however, the words which he uttered to himself, at the next moment.

"Nay, thou mayest say 'my lord' to a king properly enough, worthy Sigfred; though 'your grace' may be the more weighty and significant phrase. The 'my lord' of the thegnage is now no more," smilingly remarked the gratified potentate; "the silken cloak, and the wand of office, are exchanged, my good Sigfred, for the ermined robe and the jewelled sceptre of royal dignity." He threw himself immediately afterwards into the splendid chair of state, and withdrawing his embroidered glove, exposed, as if heedlessly, the diversity of gorgeous rings that adorned his delicately formed hand.

"A stinking elder groweth out of the place where

an oak hath been felled!" thought Sigfred; but he said, in tones of the blandest deference,—"Your Excellency will do as much honour to the one, as to the other station,—if it be permitted to so humble a lip as mine to avow the belief."

"Thou speakest with good feeling and discretion, worthy Sigfred," said the king; "be thou of my train in future. I have observed in thee parts and zeal that may well qualify thee for higher preferment. Now I bethink myself, thou shalt have, for present profit, a gafol (43) of two thousand eels a year from the dikes and meres of Umfreig, the Heretoch of Northweorthig." If Sigfred's thanks might be measured by the depth of his bow, they were of sufficient profoundness. "Speak thy mind, honest fellow," continued the monarch, with a merry air; "what, thinkest thou, should be the first acts of our kingly authority? What wouldst thou do, wert thou the sovereign instead of ourself?"

"By the rood, your glory," promptly answered the politic and shrewd henchman, lowering his voice to a respectfully-confidential whisper, "if one so ill-skilled as myself might suggest aught to your eminence, it would be, in the first place, to examine what fair women were concealed within the dusky corners of those vile old monasteries; and, in the second, my gracious Lord, to bring to light the heaps of spacious treasure that fill the crypts and other hiding-places of the fat and effeminate monks—those black locusts,

that are as voracious as the Danes themselves, with ten times their cunning and hollow faith! I warrant your Excellency, they know more of spit and spiggot than of scourge and sackcloth; and are fonder of a droll catch, or a merry toast, than of a long grace, or a bishop's blessing!"

"On the word of a king, thou speakest well, and to the point," returned the laughing Ceolwulf; pleased at finding so close an echo to his own sentiments in one he was already disposed to attach to his more confidential service. "They are deeper read in the accidents of the devil's dice than in the argument of their mass or breviary; and would run quicker to grease themselves at a good fat feast, than to anoint the dying penitent."

"Unless a large saul sceat (44) were expected," added Sigfred, in a tone of diffidence, as though he rather suggested a proviso included within the king's own remark.

"True," said Ceolwulf; "they are ever alert enough to secure the gold of the sinner, though it were got by the devil's own contrivance. By the fires of Beelzebub, I will melt bells and baubles, plate and pewter, tapers and toys, trinkets and trumpery, if the musty old shavelings deal not openly with their sanctified hoards! I will revoke charters; burn the cartularies of their houses; seize upon meadows and marshes, moors and meres, fens and fisheries; mills, stews, and warrens; empty their granaries; ransack cellars and

larders, till they are as bare as my nail; mure up the secret passages to the nuns' dormitories."

"Ply the whip in red earnest, your nobleness," exclaimed the chuckling attendant, eagerly chiming in to the tune he had himself delivered; "set up the rack, smoke them in their own holes, hang them, or bury them alive, so that the gold be had for the trouble of seizure. An't like your royal grace, they should sing their *Nunc dimittis* and their *Miserere* to fresh tunes, if I had the handling of them. Ay, and they should keep their *Quadragesima* (45), too, in a new fashion, I trow—bran and water should serve them! I'faith, I would soon scratch their feast-days out of the calendar!"

"By my hallidom," responded Ceolwulf, with the flashing eye that spoke its purpose with striking distinctness, "I will clap tax upon tax, by right and by unright, on etheling and ealdorman, hold and heretoch, bishop and abbot, monk and almsman, thane and franklin, serving-man and slave! yea, the very beggar's rags shall not aid him in passing my toll-dish! Thou rememberest the old proverb,—'Many drops make a shower.' Now I will gage my best tiger-skin against the flue of a rabbit, that there shall be such a shower in Mercia as hath not been known since the Scots and the Picts spread themselves like a cloud of locusts over the realm. By the rain of snakes described in the Apocalypse, it shall be like a fiery deluge over the land: none shall escape the net

of inquisition and forfeiture. The people have lived long enough under a King-Log—they shall now know what it is to have a King-Stork. Thou, Sigfred, shalt be my Stallere. Thou shalt seize the finest horses of the nobles and others, and say that the 'Host' hath need of them. Thou shalt not leave the monks a cop of hay, or a comb of oats. Their pampered palfreys and sleek-fed mules shall amble under the lighter weight of my mistresses and pages of honour. If there be any that challenge thy act, by the horns of the devil, I will mount them on a steed that shall bear them many a rood further than they may have the chance to ride back again. Yea, by Lucifer, the prince of devils, I will mark with fire and flame and desolation the housesteads of all who dare to oppose my will! Thunder of Thor! I will write my edicts in the blood of all that neglect my slightest wish! 'They shall tremble like a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria.' I will make all Mercia, Aceldama, a field of blood; grass shall spring not where my horse setteth his foot. Yea, like Draco of Athens, I will write my laws, not with ink, but with blood!" And he kicked aside, in the vehemence of his scornful emotion, the superbly-embroidered pedalium that stood near. "Oh, my hot blood!" continued the monarch, as if addressing himself, "what a medley of strange images are jumbled together in my disordered fancy! Jewelled garments, and gory dudgeons; bags of gold, and sparkling ingots; bear-masked helmets, and runic

war-brands; pearly hands, and gilded lutes!" He gradually sunk into a reverie, or rather a confusion of ideas, that withdrew his mind from all consciousness of the presence of another.

"And I, too, most noble master," re-echoed the humbly sympathizing Sigfred, "have a vision that seems made up of a thousand indistinct forms, hurriedly thronged together; but, above all, a gigantic and dazzling crown, whose descending rays seem to tint with a glorious lustre the darkest objects that lie mingled in the wild confusion!"

"Death on my life!" pursued the King, starting from his trance-like suspension of interest in the external circumstances of the moment, while he suddenly rose from his seat, without noticing the aptly-conceited visions of his facile confidant, "what a mysterious tumult rings through my very brain!—bells knolling, trumpets braying, laughter screeching, drums brattling, horses trampling, snorting, and neighing; shouts, and shrieks, and roaring flames!" Then, recovering from his fit of abstraction, he added, "Go, bid them saddle my mare 'Gad-fly,' good Stallere; a broad gallop across the heath—ha! Gods me, it lightens—then I will not go. By doomsday, that bellowing crash of thunder might call up old Ethelbald in his gory shroud, to—to—" The rest of the observation was lost in the terrific burst of elemental fury that shook to its deepest foundation the massive fabric in which they stood. Fierce gusts of wind burst through

the apartment. A sudden darkness spread around, but as the dazzling streak of the electric fluid darted from the heavy masses of cloud that lay piled like floating mountains on the eastern horizon, it revealed the bending trees without, agitated with fearful violence. Between each blast of wind, or crash of thunder, was heard the roaring and howling of wild beasts, that seemed to vie with the threatening elements in the fury of their rage. For a few alarming moments, a sense of guilty reproach sank deep into the trembling hearts of those foul and demon-like plotters of evil. They stood mute and appalled, as though the blast of the archangel's trumpet had aroused them by its astounding summons, and the finger of almighty vengeance had visibly pointed to their doom of eternal punishment hereafter! Flash after flash, peal after peal, streamed or roared around, in rapid sequence; the form of the murdered attendant, in its circling pool of gore, becoming awfully visible during the lighter intervals. At length, a sea of rain descended, through which, in liquid sheets, the broad and terrific lightnings flashed like huge banners depending from their battlements of sable darkness; or, at times, the forky glare of ruddy brightness quivered with a downward direction, seeming to cleave the earth as with blades of fire.

"When the storm abates, Sigfred," at length proceeded the monarch, recovering his self-possession, "thou shalt bear my salutations to my illustrious

consort, and, greeting her with the lofty title of a Queen, say, that business of state will prevent my seeing her until the morrow."

"Please your glory, my Lord King," hastily responded the Stallere, with a bow of most courtier-like humility, "I will not waste an instant in bearing to her eminence the intelligence you direct. The bidding of a great sovereign must be executed though Nature herself—" Here another vivid flash of lightning, and a glimpse of the livid and stiffening corse that lay near, checked his intended expression; and the fawning and ambitious satellite of greatness only added:—"though the mean instrument of its performance, should perish in the attempt."

Again repeating a lowly obeisance, and reverently uttering his thanks for the honoured mission, the new-made Stallere withdrew, passed through the adjoining chambers, and soon afterwards stepped out into the Lion Ward; when the next succeeding rush of red-forked lightning, accompanied by an instantaneous burst of volleyed thunders, laid him a blasted and blackened corpse upon the shattered pavement!

"O' my life," soliloquised the rapt King, unconscious of the terrible destruction of his humbler partner in the proposed career of murder and sacrilege; "O' my life, the words have a noble and a swelling sound—'My Lord King!'—'Your Glory!'—'Your Glory!'—'My Lord King!'"

"'Your Ass's-head!'—'My Lord Littlewit!'—

'My Lord Littlewit!'—'Your Ass's-head!'" echoed Bumbur, in the same pompous tone, while he poked his grotesque visage, with its long-eared cap, into the apartment, at a side door; but, seeing the dead body of the unlucky cupbearer, as suddenly jerked it back again.

"Ah, King Askew's Jester!—his bauble for the present protects him. I' faith, some people keep a fool that might as well take the character upon themselves." Thus said or thought the monarch as he proceeded to quit the dismal scene of his opening greatness. "To-morrow night," resumed he, still conversing with himself, "my lovely Cariberta shall recline, as Queen, on the ivory state-bed presented by Charlemagne to Offa; and which is decorated with the sphynx hangings given by Charles the Bald, to Burrhed. Yes, to-morrow night shall she repose, in regal magnificence, in the great bed-chamber of the Eagle Tower. By the gay torch of Freia, even *her* beauteous brow will show lovelier when encircled with the 'Snogöje' of Mercia's queenly pomp, with the fascinating verdure of its rim of matchless emeralds! And now I think of it, the emerald was dedicated to beautiful Venus, the mark or symbol of love and of generation. The very thought is delicious!—Courage, courage, King Ceolwulf! thou shalt yet be the Bretwaïda, or chief King of the English—Basileus of Britain—Emperor and Ruler of all the Sovereigns and Nations who inhabit the Island—Lord Paramount

of the Sceptres of the Cumbrians, the Scots, and the Britons!"

The shrill voice of Bumbur was heard in the distance, playfully contrasting itself with the solemn bursts of the receding thunder; while the burthen of his song furnished no inapt commentary on King Ceolwulf's grandiose meditations.

"Drink, brothers, drink—
 What says truth o'er the glass?
Why, a KING that lacks wisdom
 Is but a *crowned ass!*"

"And now for the Peacock chamber," said the king, striking with accustomed ease into a dark, but well-known passage that conducted to the Broad-arrow tower, where the lovely Deorwyn, daughter of Dudda, Golde and Bugega, the charming sisters of Athelsin, and Adenfled, the young and beautiful wife of Leonric, so lately released from their cruel captivity in the "Eastern fort," were now confined, and at the mercy of one to whom the very name of mercy carried with it a sentiment of degrading weakness.

"Ha! ha! ha! not a word, friend Sigfred, of the Peacock chamber to Queen Cariberta! Her highness will best understand that business of state detains us from the royal couch. Not a word, my good Stallere, not a word." And King Ceolwulf presented himself to the alarmed objects of his perfidious constraint. The fate of these unhappy noblewomen must be left to the sympathizing fears of the reader.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE "NORTHERN CHRONICLES."—EXTRACTS CONTINUED : THE SUFFERINGS OF MERCIA UNDER THE DANISH USURPATION. — THE DANISH ARMY AT LENGTH WITHDRAWN.—KING ASKEW, WITH A CHOSEN BAND OF FOLLOWERS, GARRISONS THE EASTERN FORT, AS A CHECK UPON CEOLWULF AND THE DISCONTENTED MERCIANS.

ROSSE. Alas, poor country,
Almost afraid to know itself! It cannot
Be call'd our mother, but our grave : where nothing,
But who knows nothing, is once seen to smile ;
Where sighs, and groans, and shrieks that rent the air,
Are made, not mark'd ; where violent sorrow seems
A modern ecstasy ; the dead man's knell
Is there scarce ask'd, for whom ; and good men's lives
Expire before the flowers in their caps,
Dying, or ere they sicken.

Macbeth, Act iv. sc. 3.

ENGLAND had now become the divided possession of two powers, the West Saxons and the Danes, who had subjugated the whole of the island except Wessex. The 'heathen-folk' burst like a devouring flame over the country; their wild howlings and ferocious manner adding a stranger terror to their approach. They were armed with all kinds of barbarian weapons—

with slings, knotted clubs shod with iron, and darts, often pointed with bone or flint; and, being covered, in many instances, with the tails of horses and red bulls, and having the heads of wild boars, bears, wolves, and other fierce animals, placed, open-mouthed, over their helmets, they were distinguished by an unnatural and spectral appearance. Not a few of these wild invaders had their bodies bared to the waist, and were smeared with blood and dirt from head to heel; while, to add to the odd, uncouth grimness of their savage aspect, they wore caps of hard-boiled leather, fitting tightly to the skull. They advanced sometimes like wild beasts, with sudden leaps, and inarticulate cries; at other times they marched in a kind of measured, quaintly-solemn step, to the shrill accompaniment of their rude clarions, or the harsh and hoarsely-resounding roll of their drums. The more regularly-appointed warriors wore lofty feathers in their helms, and were attired in a polished iron cuirass, or a mail-shirt, and carried long halberds in their hands. They were also armed with two-edged darts for throwing at a distance, and with broad, straight, and heavy swords of immoderate length, as well as with short crooked scimetars, which they used on coming to close action.

They often, on the eve of battle, sang a wild enthusiastic strain in honour of Thor and Odin, and other of their gods; while the rude dissonance of their voices, especially when breaking in upon the

solemn stillness of night, or of early day, resembled nothing earthly. Their uncouth and gigantic forms, and the fierce and savage aspect of their war-horses, gave them an air of rude sublimity. Their march more generally resembled, in its celerity and tumultuous movement, the rushing course of the foaming streams of the North, dashing over broken ledges of rock, in wild cascades, to the dismal valleys below. Their picturesque figures, and uncultured bearing, also brought to the eye of the imagination the lofty and romantic grandeur of their native scenery—its boundless forests—its dark abyss of ravines frightful for their depth—its crags and pinnacles clothed with snow or glaciers—its brawling torrents and roaring cataracts—its rugged and fantastic hills, and frowning, dangerous precipices—its jagged and dazzling outline of mountain-summits, towering in Alpine majesty, above the clouds. Their shout, in battle or assault, was as the loud cry of the eagle re-echoed through the silence of the desert; or as the shrill howling of the wolf reverberating through the subterranean caverns, and mingling with the dash of the roaring cataract. Images of picturesque desolation blended themselves with their restless, comfortless, danger-seeking existence. There was something, too, of mystical wonder associated with the dark regions which had given them birth. From the earliest times, the North was esteemed the storehouse, as it were, of nature's most sublime secrets. It presented a vast

region, bounded, as it was believed, with a waveless ocean, and clothed with perpetually-brooding mist and shadow, through which the imagination only attempted to penetrate. The Greeks, in their cosmogony, termed it the abode of darkness, but deemed that the solar paradise, and the mansions of the blessed, were shrouded in its far, mysterious solitudes. There, also, according to their mythic belief, the first operations of nature were performed for the subsequent regulation of the universe. Day being the offspring of night, it was imagined, in their fanciful theory of superstition, that, in those regions of habitual darkness, Latona produced her mighty offspring, Apollo and Diana, the alternately-presiding luminaries of heaven. When the wintry shadows of the northern skies were illuminated with the darting, many-coloured, and gigantic rays of the Aurora, they believed that those mysterious lightnings emanated from the forms of the Scandinavian deities, who, at such times, disclosed themselves to their adoring worshippers, in all the celestial majesty of their divine nature. Thus, for many succeeding centuries, the North continued the theme of credulous wonder—a region seen only in the dreams of fancy, and possessing but a vague existence in the traditions of mythic superstition.

During the residence of the Northmen at Hreopandún, an immense body of Scandinavian troops arrived in Britain and incorporated themselves with their

compatriots in Mercia. An incessant alarm and turmoil prevailed. Assaults and bickerings, tribulations and murmurings, abounded. They employed their time in daily ravages of the surrounding country, plundering whom they pleased; and, not contented with the spoil which they acquired, treated the unfortunate inhabitants with the most barbarous cruelty. Every kind of riot and excess was committed by these unhallowed spoliators. They seized the wives and daughters of the most considerable thanes, and, with fiendish atrocity, violated them before the face of the unhappy chieftains. The most horrible tortures were inflicted on sufferers of either sex, whenever the slightest opposition was manifested to the reckless violence, or licentious outrage, of the brutal oppressor. The limbs of victims were wrapped in oiled flax, and torches or lighted straw applied to the parts; in other instances, the feet were reversed, or the ribs spread into the form of an eagle's wings. The soles of their feet were cut crosswise, and chopped horse-hair thrown into the wounds, to prevent them from healing. Castles, monasteries, and churches were levelled with the ground, everything of value being carried away; towns and villages were sacked and consumed, and the country laid waste, while the flying population was indiscriminately slaughtered, or made captive, and driven through the land from sea to sea, with the innumerable herds of cattle, droves of horses, and other plunder. So completely was the spirit of

the distracted people broken by the dreadful cruelties and sufferings, and the savage persecutions which they had endured, that it was not unusual to see two or three Danish soldiers driving a troop of several hundred prisoners from one station or encampment of the enemy to another. Or, did an occasional quarrel ensue in the larger towns, where the natives were more numerous, it was generally found that one Dane was a match in fight for ten or more of the degenerate Mercians. In this period of dreadful anarchy, the perfidious slave of a noble would often, in revenge, become an ally of the nearest body of invaders, and betray the family of his unsuspecting master to the exterminating cruelty, or still more dreaded pollution, of the midnight ravager. Hate, jealousy, oppression, and fraud, now found their long-thirsted-for opportunities of indulgence. Blood deluged the land, and lust revelled in wildest excess; the noblest ladies of the realm falling daily victims to the ruffian violence of the bonded villain and common pirate. The bride was torn from the altar; the novice from the holy service of the initiatory mass; while the sanctity of the connubial state was violated, with every circumstance of derisive outrage (46).

At length the difficulty of providing for so vast an army, in the same district, compelled the Danish marauders to separate. They accordingly divided their forces into two bodies, one of which, under Halfdene, proceeded into Northumberland, where they sub-

jected to their sway the whole of the adjoining country, and wasted with fire and sword the possessions of the neighbouring Picts and Pictish Britons. The other and larger division, under the conduct of Oskitul, Gothrun, and Amwynd, directed their course to Cwatbricge, where they wintered and resided twelve months, spreading themselves like a tempest of desolation, over the contiguous territories, whence the illustrious Alfred, who now possessed the crown of the West Saxons, vainly attempted to dislodge them. Although occasionally defeated, they seemed to wax more powerful with every struggle; reverses served but to inflame them to feats of higher enterprize. Every part of Britain by turns became exposed to their daring inroads. Their leaders were universally distinguished for their experience and valour; and so numerous were the armies which they successively brought into the field, that it was a common saying of the English, "If thirty thousand are slain in one day, there will be double that number in the fight on the morrow."

King Askew, with his household and guards, amounting to upwards of two hundred followers, remained at Hreopandún to keep watch over the acts of Ceolwulf, and gain also timely notice of any conspiracy that might be formed by the discontented Mercians. The castle, which formed the royal chief's abode, was of prodigious strength and great antiquity, having been built by the Romans in the reign of their illustrious emperor, the elder Antonine. It was situate on an

eminence to the east of the city, its fortifications extending nearly to the walls of the latter. Seven towers, chiefly composed of a black and rugged stone, and varying in height and structure, rose in warlike array, seeming to menace, or at least regard with scornful dignity, the humble dwellings of wood, that formed the greater part of the Saxon city. In this majestic fortress had been preserved uninjured the most splendid remains of Roman luxury; its spacious and magnificent halls having furnished a frequent retreat to the emperors and more illustrious nobles of Britain. Vast subterranean passages and chambers, to an extent almost equalling the mighty superstructure, were said to exist in almost unvisited privacy, having been originally constructed for the purpose of communication with the citadel, another Roman edifice, which looked down from a somewhat lower height on the west of the city, and for the more general objects of safety and concealment during the changeful events and uncertain issues of a warlike colonization. The most exquisite sculptures of Grecian art, the noblest tributes of its glorious pencil, were throughout these cryptic recesses, as well as amid the stately apartments of the main edifice, blended in exhaustless profusion with all that the kindred magnificence of Rome could call forth, to add enchantment to an abode devoted to the august retirement of her most distinguished rulers. The hand of time had pressed lightly on this rare collection of antique treasures— the moment when they should be

swept for ever from the catalogue of human record, seemed now to have arrived. They had been spared by the contending factions of the Britons from a joint reverence towards their ancient allies; the Scots and Picts, when they swept like a deluge from east to west over the island, had passed them by; the hand of Crida had protected them, when, in those conquered halls, he erected the throne of Saxon dominion; and love for the memory of the bold and enterprising founder of Mercia, had, from time to time, turned aside the axe of threatened demolition, during the many desolating wars that had subsequently raged around. But now the wildly-brandished ategar of the devastating Dane gleamed ominously amidst those gorgeous relics. The generous spirit of the heroic Askew might alone defer the hour of impending ruin!

The wide ramparts of the castle, or, as it was called, the "Eastern Fort," were guarded, night and day, by a vigilant body of household-troops, who had been individually selected for their warlike distinction. All strangers were forbidden, under pain of death, to enter within the gates. The same penalty also attached to those of the royal household, who should on any pretence whatever harbour a strange guest, or connive at his admission within the formidable inclosure. A horse's head stuck on a lance, and turned towards the city, was hoisted above the massy portal called the "Black Gate," that faced the west, as a symbol of vengeance (47) against such as should pre-

sume, without the king's own licence, to approach those awful battlements; while, in the night, blood-hounds were let loose in the outer ward, and a huge beacon was exhibited on the Barbican, or watch-tower, as an emblem of perpetual vigilance. Twenty-four war-steeds stood saddled and accoutred, night and day, to be ready at an instant's need.

> "Twice twelve chargers nobly sired, rein-disdaining,
> Pawing, ranged in stallèd rank;
> Manes with braids of scarlet grac'd, hoofs with polished iron brilliant."

With the like jealous regard to security, and to carry out the system of espionage, a strong party of King Askew's huscarls, or thinga-manna, always did duty with those of King Ceolwulf, at the "Roman Citadel." These precautions were adjudged necessary, as the new-made monarch's treacherous qualities had been sufficiently exposed, and the inhabitants of Hreo-pandún, and of the surrounding district, naturally regarded the small remaining band of their invaders with bitter hostility. The destruction of their venerated monastery, and of the mausoleum of their revered Ethelbald and Wichtlaf; the ruinous state of their boasted metropolitan city; the loss of their beloved friends and kinsmen; the apportionment of all places of power and trust amongst the Danes; and the spoliation which continued to reduce thousands of their countrymen to irremediable

want, were injuries that cried aloud for atonement or revenge.

"A spectacle
Of horror and affright to passers by,
Our groaning country bled at every vein,
When murders, rapes, and massacres prevail'd;
When churches, palaces, and cities blaz'd,
When insolence and barbarism triumph'd,
And swept away distinction; peasants trod
Upon the necks of nobles: low were laid
The reverend crosier and the holy mitre,
And desolation cover'd all the land."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE "NORTHERN CHRONICLES."—EXTRACTS CONTINUED: KING CEOLWULF'S BOAST OF THE MATCHLESS BEAUTY OF HIS CONSORT.—THE QUESTION OF HER SUPERIORITY REFERRED TO KING ASKEW.

BIRON. Who sees the heavenly Rosaline,
That, like a rude and savage man of Inde,
At the first opening of the gorgeous east,
Bows not his vassal head; and strucken blind,
Kisses the base ground with obedient breast?
What peremptory eagle-sighted eye
Dares look upon the heaven of her brow,
That is not blinded by her majesty?
Love's Labour's Lost, Act iv. sc. 3.

As King Askew and the Danish tributary, Ceolwulf, sat together in the Cafertun, or Great Hall-chamber, of the "Roman Citadel," drinking, from time to time, the clear bright cæren (48) that was brought to them in the tall and twisted (49) cups, it came to pass that their discourse fell on the beauty of women. Then did King Askew greatumlie speak of the fair and excellent damosels he had seen in the dwellings of many princes; yet weeted he that none might equal the lovely Gyda, daughter of Huitserk the Brave, son of the renowned Ragnar Lodbrok. Much did he praise

the divers charms of this young and royal maiden, describing the sweetness of her speech, the perfect gentleness of her manners, and her graceful and dignified carriage. The haughty and now excited Ceolwulf, well deeming that, throughout the earth, was none so fair and beauteous as his own consort, the far-famed Cariberta, daughter of Hulbrand Count of Mellent (a lady of such admirable charms, that she was styled, in the court of Charles the Bald, the "Flower and Pearl of Neustria") (50), and, being willing withal that so skilled a judge as his famous guest should confess and speak abroad of her matchless endowments, did thereupon ask and demand of him, whether he would choose to gaze on a female incomparably brighter than any he had yet beheld, in all his wide wanderings; and whether, if such an one he saw, he would freely make known from that time forth, that in all the world he had not beheld so noble, goodly, and fair a lady, so well worthy to be affected as she was, her beauty so fresh and gracious; and that those he had before admired, were but as stars in comparison with the golden orb of day, when sought to be matched with the peerless Cariberta. Now this was the point to which the wily guest had endeavoured to shape their discourse; and, with much concealed joy, he gravely answered, that he never looked to behold so beautiful and majestic a lady as the accomplished Gyda; yet, if her superior might be found, he would willingly, and in all fairness, proclaim and make

known her so exceeding merit. Thereat, the well-pleased Ceolwulf, smiling, drew from his tunic a mermaid-formed whistle of daintiest ivory, hugelie and rarelie carvellyd, and blew therein; when momentlie there stood before him the hall-thane, he that in his hand bare the twisted wine-cup; and the King said privily unto him, "Speak thou unto Adeleve, the chief bower-woman of the Queen, saying that I desire, in all gentleness and love, that my dear consort would robe herself in the garments of flowered silver which were brought from Bretagne; putting on likewise the bracelets of pearl which the late Queen received as a marriage-gift from the West-Saxon Earl, Ethelnoth (51), and the emerald-rimmed crown, called the "Snogöje" (52), with the green and white feathers thereto belonging, and forthwith appear in the mead-hall, with her maidens." Then, raising his voice, he added,—"Bid due speech be made unto her Highness, that I would unto her present mine honoured guest, the 'Renowned of Victory,' the 'Helmet of his People,' the 'Highest Type of Honour,' the most potent, puissant, illustrious, and ever-glorious prince, Askew of Lethra."

"His soul is a hawk with its eyes bound!" thought the hall-thane, as he pondered on the message of his weak and short-sighted master. And he muttered to himself the old Dutch proverb,—

"As dat beer is in den man,
Is de wyshet in de kan."

"As (*when*) the beer is in the man,
The wisdom is in the can."

Then the joyous Ceolwulf called for another and larger cup of the sparkling wine, and his eye grew bright with exulting pride, as he forethought himself of the lowly admiration with which his surprised guest would bow before the unequalled and far-surpassing loveliness of the dark-eyed Cariberta.

The thoughts of King Askew had long dwelt on the many reports that had gone abroad concerning the Queen's peerless beauty; and he had devised, albeit with feeble hope, how he might secretly compass a sight of this closely-concealed and jealously-watched lady, whom Ceolwulf had but lately espoused at Lyons or Rouen, while on a mission from Burrhed to the court of Charles the Bald. The hour was now unexpectedly come when his anxious wish should be openly and fully gratified. Even yet before he saw her, did his heart beat with strange emotion, as confessing her wondrous charms; and long and tedious seemed the time that passed, ere the sound of gentle footsteps, over the rushes of the near chamber, told him of the approach of the renowned beauty, with her maiden choir.

At length the folding doors wide opened; and, springing hastily from his seat, he accompanied with eager impatience, yet with slowly-measured and monarch-like gait, his self-flattered host to the mouth of the hall (as the rule of ceremony required), in order to conduct from the threshold the blooming and youthful Queen.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE "NORTHERN CHRONICLES." — EXTRACTS CONTINUED: KING ASKEW'S INTRODUCTION TO QUEEN CARIBERTA. — HIS BOUNDLESS ADMIRATION OF HER CHARMS. — THE FATAL AND UNFORESEEN RESULT.

PRO. Was this the idol that you worship so?
VAL. Even she; but is she not a heavenly saint?
PRO. No; but she is an earthly paragon.
Two Gentlemen of Verona, Act ii. sc. 4.

NEVER may words paint the beauty of Cariberta! She seemed a goddess newly-descended from her starry throne in the azure halls of heaven! The dim grey light that feebly broke through the high and narrow windows, seemed to repose itself on her bright and transparent figure, as if it were absorbed by the commanding lustre of her charms, and turned disdainfully away from every other object. A cloud of raven curls, wantoning lightly in a thousand different forms, spread their glossy shadows over a neck whose polished and delicate hue, outrivalling the freshness of the lily ere it expands itself to the mid-day sun, was rendered yet fairer by the power of their contrasting darkness. Her round and graceful arms,

tapering with softest outline, exceeded in whiteness the plumage of the swan or dove; and her small and exquisitely-moulded hand was as the snow of the morning when it falls lightly on the mountain's crest. She smiled, and her ruby lip that seemed melting with tenderness, disclosed the pearly treasure beneath; while her damask-tincted cheek, pervaded with a downy softness, revealed a playful dimple, which gave an air of the most lovely archness to her finely-expressive features. The lofty expanse of her brow, radiant with the majesty of angelic repose, and the rich stream of sensibility that glowed within the depths of her black and sparkling eye, proclaimed in eloquent phrase, the delight which her conversation and society were calculated to inspire.

And now that eye gleamed with a half-conscious sense of triumph; that cheek became suffused with a livelier crimson; and that snowy frame trembled with a vague emotion of pride and pleasure, as she approached, in all the magic power of commanding beauty, the dazzled, yet delighted hero, whom she beheld affected with the deepest sentiments of admiration. Nor did King Ceolwulf reckon vainly the influence of the Queen's loveliness over his disbelieving guest; for, at the first glance, did King Askew seem as one who had been struck "with lightning, and was deprived of all animation." He had not words to express the wonder with which he was fired; but, drawing near with irresolute steps, and a subdued

mien, he knelt, in silent homage, at her feet. The lovely monarch extended her hand to raise him, when, as if the act recalled his consciousness of the privilege which awaited him, he caught it vehemently, yet respectfully, within his own, and imprinted on it a wild and fervent kiss. A deep sigh betrayed the energy of his passion; and again, with eager rapture, he repeated his salutation of her snowy hand, covering its taper fingers with trembling kisses.

"I pray you rise, my Lord King," she exclaimed, in a voice whose tones were like the sweetest music, "and allow me to welcome your Glory (53), as the most honoured guest that can claim our feeble, yet heart-rendered attentions."

The voluptuous richness of her voice completed the fascination of the spell. He hurriedly rose, and, venturing to gaze once more upon her radiant cheek, now glowing with the deepest crimson, and extending his glance along her exquisite form, he cried aloud, while his voice and manner bespoke the depth of his emotion:—"Oh, that such divine beauty should rejoice the earth, yet dwell apart from the home of the hero! I will transport it to the halls of the mighty in war! It shall shine as the northern star in the firmament, and the proudest of warriors shall bow before its beams! Yes, lady, henceforth the mailed host of weaponed men—the people of the storm, shall be your subjects! This moment art thou free from the base confinement in which thou hast been held—

free from the obscure embraces of this Saxon hilding! The pine mateth not itself with the crab, nor the rose with the rude and common nettle. It is not for the serf-born to aspire to the daughter of nobility. It is not for a coward to revel in the enchanted favours of beauty. It is not for a traitor to approach the bosom of innocence. In a word, it is not for a vassal to question the act of his liege. Thou shalt be the Queen, the idol, the goddess—nay, the very eye and soul of the giant-son of Odin! Thou art mine, beautiful Cariberta, mine, by the rights of war, and by the controlling voice of destiny (54)! Death only shall claim thee from my embrace—nay, let the doomsday come upon the earth, I will not part with thee?" Thus exclaiming, the terrific chief drew his broad and redly-gleaming spada, and, brandishing the enchanted blade over his "Dragon"-crested helm, asked who would oppose his will.

"He stood with eyes likest to flame, a frightful light!"

The eyes of the Mercian monarch dilated to double their ordinary size, a cold perspiration stood upon his brow; his jaw trembled, his frame became convulsed. Overcome with emotion, the queen sank into the arms of her shrieking attendants. Thereafter was there a deep and stirless silence; till, at length, King Ceolwulf, now deadly pale, urged him piteously to renounce his purpose, calling upon him, by his love of the gods, to abandon his foul design.

"No," replied the exulting chief, "though Faul (55), or Neccus (56), should oppose his defiance, yet would I dare the strife in such a cause! Never will I yield the dearest object of my heart, while I have an arm to defend her! Call forth your palace-band, your Jarlls and Thegns, and valiant war-chiefs—bid them to the rescue. Lo, I tell thee, Saxon, I will step over their dead bodies to thy gate, if they resist me. It is not for the chough to dispute the right of the eagle! The monarch-bird abideth by its own will, knowing no other law!—Most divine lady," he added, as the beautiful Cariberta appeared to revive, "I now lay my heart at your feet, beseeching you, with humblest prayer, to accept my shield of defence; and you, maidens, grieve not, your fairest mistress shall still be yours. Fear nothing; the sword of Askew recketh not of weapons (57)! Nor doubt thou, Ceolwulf, that I will proclaim and make known the beauty of thy bride in humbler terms than her excellencies may deserve! Henceforth she shall be the soul of my soul, the blood of my blood, the life of my life—yea, my life, my light, my jewel, my glory!—dear to me as the runes (58) enwrought by Sindri (59) on my war-blade, the mystic legacy of Hrædla!—Farewell!"

Then, hastily approaching the queen, who again relapsed into insensibility, he once more raised her hand to his lips, and, gently removing her from the arms of her weeping train, bore her lightly, beneath the protection of his ponderous and gigantic shield,

from the scene of his daring enterprise, closely attended by the terrified maidens, who instinctively obeyed the command they had received to wait on their beloved mistress. Encircling, with tenderest care, the span-broad waist of his beautiful prize, with his shield-arm; while he raised aloft his dreadful brand, as defying all opposition, with the other, he proceeded, with deliberate and haughty stride, through the embattled court, thronged with soldiery,—none daring to demand the warrant of his act. In a brief space, and ere Ceolwulf had recovered from his trance of fear and surprise, the fair monarch, and her youthful companions in captivity, were lodged within the Flint Tower of the Eastern Fort, which looked down from an eminence on the city walls and the gate of Offa.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE "NORTHERN CHRONICLES." — EXTRACTS CONTINUED: KING CEOLWULF'S INDIGNATION AND DESPAIR ON THE LOSS OF HIS QUEEN. — BOLD ADVICE OF THE WARRIOR EADULF. — ABJECT COWARDICE AND MEANNESS OF THE MERCIAN MONARCH.

YORK. Scarce can I speak, my choler is so great.
Oh, I could hew up rocks, and fight with flint!
King Henry VI., Part II. act 5, sc. 1.

KING CEOLWULF now bitterly repented his insane folly in having exposed the charms of his fair consort to the licentious gaze of the Dane; and he upbraided, with furious scorn, the dastardly cowardice of his soldiers, who could allow a single warrior to pass through their crowded ranks, with no less a spoil than the wife of their chief, and the queen of a wide-spreading realm. One moment he tore his robes in despair, at the next he strode through the hall with shouts of vengeance, while every limb seemed quivering with wrath and vexation.

"Frosts on my heart!" he exclaimed; "the beautiful Cariberta is no longer mine!—Wretch that I am, who had not courage to stand forth in her defence!—Even now is she in the loathly embrace of the Dane!—Death and devils! but I will have a dear

revenge, if brands and broad flames may do my bidding! Without there—bid the Earl Eadulf attend me!" He bit his lips in fury: he could have torn his flesh for anger.

Long did he pour forth vows of retaliation, accompanied by execrations on himself and bitterest reproaches on those around him. At length his rage became exhausted, and, committing himself to the privacy of his chamber, he gave way to the deepest emotions of sorrow.

Earl Eadulf was now admitted into the king's solitary closet, where he was immediately afterwards joined by the humiliated monarch.

"Knowest thou, worthy old man," asked the despairing Ceolwulf, "that thy fair daughter, the lovely Elstritha, is the prisoner of the lawless Dane! Within this half-hour hath the atrocious Askew villanously seized upon the Queen, whose captivity he compelled her attendants to share. Had I possessed the courage of Joshua of old, my single sword could have availed nothing, as thou knowest, against the 'Dragon of the Shield,' as this ferocious monster is well named, who would as soon lose his teeth as let go his prey. Even the boldest of my men-at-arms dared not to oppose the treble-sinewed man-a-mountain's path. Nay, it is said that he hath the strength of thirty men in the gripe of his hand. His arm is the arrow of death!—Say, good Eadulf, what hast thou of counsel in this dreadful moment?"

"Oh, my dearest daughter!" was the noble warrior's mournful apostrophe, "how is thy father's heart torn by this cruel evil!" Then, turning to the king, he abruptly added:—"Lose we not a moment in forcing our way into the spoiler's hold. *I* will lead on the troops; and twenty Askews, with all their terrors, shall not bar my path to the recovery of my child! Haste—let thy mandate go forth. I will but step to my home for the armour and weapons of my youth; for the sword with which I fought, in later manhood, at Ellandún (60), under the conquering Egbert, when Mercia's power was broken for ever!" He rushed to the door of the chamber, and, turning a farewell glance towards the king, observed that the latter was deliberating, rather than resolved on the proposed measure. He therefore paused, and, in a tone of reproachful impatience, added:—"In those days were there soldiers in Hreopandún—hearts, as well as vestments, of steel; souls that loved the gleam of the falchion in the hour of danger, as they did the beam of the eye of beauty in the moments of honourable repose!" An air of scorn mingled with his address, as he perceived that Ceolwulf still wavered.

"Those were men," he continued, "that even Egbert forbore to attack on their native plains, though elated with his great victory. Now is there neither courage nor skill left to the troops of the unhappy Mercia! The rashness of Beornwulf and Ludican, in their wars with East Anglia, sacrificed the noblest of

her armies; and then did Egbert bear his victorious standard, without opposition, into the heart of her cities. I was raised to an earldom for my military services in those days of vigour and enterprise; and now do I live to behold a wretched handful of uncivilized marauders lord it over a realm which the mighty Egbert respected for military valour? By the memories of Ellandún, my blood boils with very hatred of the soil that seeks not to cast out such degenerate slaves! But I will hence for my armour—for that armour," he exclaimed with the garrulity natural to excited age, "wherein I afterwards fought against Merfyn Frych (61) and Roderick Mawr (62), beneath the conquering standard of the honoured Ethelwulf; and, old and strengthless as I am, I will let this Danish hound know that he shall prey on meaner carrion than the flesh of Eadulf! Be instant—and I promise thee success!" And he struck his breast with an air of dignified decision and intrepid resolution.

At the first moment the king was gratified by the courage of his thane; at the next, he felt humbled by its contrast with his own cowardice. Then he called to mind a fact which he had yet overlooked—namely, the certain loss of his kingdom, as the result of any hostility against his too powerful masters. This reflection stifled the irritating sense of his wrongs, and banished all thoughts of personal revenge. He therefore endeavoured to soothe the grief and resentment

of the gallant veteran with assurances of the probable safety of his daughter; stating his determination to lay the grievance which he had sustained before the chief council of the Danish Host at Cwatbricge (63), who, he doubted not, would do him justice against the ravisher.

"Will they restore to thee the honour of thy bed?" indignantly demanded the aged noble. "O thou, who fillest the throne of Crida and of Wulfhere, of Ethelred and of Offa the 'Terrible (64),' dost thou tremble to meet the single sword of the violator of thy bed?"

The king coolly observed, that the loss of his kingdom would be alike the issue of his failure or success in the proposed enterprise.

"Base, detestable coward, and besotted fool!" passionately rejoined the high-hearted thane, "dost thou count the loss of thy bauble-crown an evil to be mated with the defilement of thy wife, and that of the daughters of thy nobles? A king? a king? Oh, it is monstrous, monstrous! The spirit of the meanest ceorl (65) would despise thee!"

"Bolts and shackles!" vociferated the enraged monarch, "this shall be instantly answered for. What ho!—guards, guards!"

"Hark in thine ear, thou insolent noise-maker," replied the ancient warrior, "I fear thee not. A king!—a freckled whelp!—a thick-skinned boor!—a most abhorred, peasantly traitor!"

"Adders and snakes!" exclaimed the almost choking king, "if there be truth in steel thou shalt dearly abye this insult." And, drawing forth his mermaid-whistle, he blew a shrill, impatient blast, as a hurried summons to his attendants.

"Ass! 'block! villain! slave! I defy and scorn thee!" slowly and disdainfully uttered the high-born and chivalric soldier. And, at the next moment, he carelessly flung from the royal closet, while the hastily-entering hall-thane arrived but to witness the added mortification and ill-concealed shame of the hapless representative of royalty.

The shades of evening deepened over cliff and stream, over wood and valley, over fort and city. The piercing cry of the lonely stag was heard, at intervals, amid the stillness of the hour, from his haunts amid the forest hills on the south. The wolf and the bear were seeking abroad their prey; and the owl swept with murky wing through the pale, cold shadows of the sky. Darkness reigned in solemn majesty over the halls of sleep. Another day, with its varied amount of human joy and suffering, and with its surviving record of good and evil, had departed to seek the awful bourn of ETERNITY!

CHAPTER XXV.

THE "NORTHERN CHRONICLES." — EXTRACTS CONTINUED: THE GRIEVOUS OPPRESSIONS OF CEOLWULF. — CONSPIRACY OF EARL EADULF AND OTHER NOBLES FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF THE DANISH GARRISON AND DETHRONEMENT OF CEOLWULF.

As the plaine path to their designe appeares,
Of whose wish'd sight they had been long debarr'd
By the dissolving of those threat'ning feares,
That many a purpose, many a plot had marr'd,
Their hope at full so heartily them cheares,
And their protection, by a stronger guard,
Lends them that leysure, the events to cast
Of things to come, by those alreadie past.
The Barons' Warres, Can. iii. st. 60.

KING CEOLWULF'S appeal to the Danish Council was treated with contempt. His tyrannous exaction of a thousand pounds from the monks of the destroyed abbey of Croyland, was made the subject of a counter-charge against himself; and he plainly saw, from the character of this proceeding, that his deputed power was but of precarious tenure. He therefore determined to enrich himself, while yet the opportunity offered; and he accordingly levied exorbitant taxes on the merchants, plundered the unfortunate peasantry, and

oppressed the clergy and others with grievous exactions (66). His cravings were insatiable, and his demands were enforced by the most barbarous cruelties. Under the convenient pretext that he was compelled to raise the tribute imposed on the nation by the Danish conquerors, he violently seized upon the treasures of the monasteries, and on the possessions of the nobility, putting to the torture, or depriving of sight, or of limbs, all whom he suspected of having made concealment of their effects. In a word, he confirmed his oath, to "sign himself with blood to the very arm-pits," whenever his slightest command was interfered with. Merchants (the vena porta of a kingdom), ceased to visit the Mercian cities; the thanes fled from their estates; the few existing cultivators of the soil, and the votaries of religion, alone remained, as the objects of his tyrannous oppressions. "It was then," according to the testimony of Ingulf, "that all the goblets of the monastery [of Croyland] except three, together with the whole of the silver vessels except the crucibolum (67) of King Wichtlaf, and other plate and jewellery of immense value, which were either converted into coin, or sold for money, scarcely sufficed to pacify the insatiable cravings of Ceolwulf." His example was followed by the barbarian chieftains that formed the leading members of his court; and never, perhaps, in the history of any kingdom, was so wide and unscrupulous a system of plunder and depredation pursued under the colour of

regal authority. He made progresses through the country, and issued proclamations, to manifest his sanction of the Danish exactions, as well as personally to inspect and promote the work of spoliation, for his own advantage. So impoverished became the monastery of Croyland, once so wealthy and renowned, that, according to the venerable authority we have just quoted, "converts ceased to frequent its walls; the greater part of the professed monks and novices either returned to their friends, or dispersed themselves throughout the country, while the abbot, Godric, remaining in the monastery with a few who were attached to him, dragged out a miserable existence in the lowest poverty."

Meantime, the friends of the late King, recovering from their panic, and from the dissociating tendencies of their late overthrow, saw, with feelings of the deepest indignation, the ruined walls and habitations of their once beautiful city; and they mourned, with self-accusing regret, the loss of their murdered kinsmen. An increasing sense of humiliation mingled with the recollection of their late supineness, while the enforced flight of their age-enfeebled but beloved sovereign, and the exaltation of a minister of low, intriguing character to the highest pinnacle of power, aroused them to the determination of vindicating their wrongs. A perception of collective existence—a feeling of unity—a consolidation of power, and a new development of resources, urged them to spurn the

base vassalage in which they were held, and to enter upon a combined and general system of attack and defence. The rapacious and sanguinary outrages committed by the Danish representative and his equally unprincipled courtiers, hastened the execution of their project. A plot, having for its object the seizure of the sovereign power, in favour of the illustrious Alfred, the grandson of Egbert, and late chief-sovereign of Mercia, was laid by Eadulf, whose great military experience and enthusiastic valour highly qualified him for so difficult and daring an undertaking. The number of his adherents was considerable, and comprised many influential thanes and superior officers of the late king, who, uniting talents and activity with rectitude of principle, spurned the elevation of the base and low-born Ceolwulf, and ardently sought to avenge the shame and dishonour which the kingdom had sustained through his treacherous instrumentality.

The destruction of King Askew and his household was the first step to be prosecuted. For this purpose, Berdic, an ambulatory glee-man, or minstrel, who had long resided in Gaul, was engaged by the chief conspirators to present himself under the windows of the Eastern Fort, and play on his harp or lyre the airs of Queen Cariberta's native land; by which means they hoped that, with her sanction, he might gain admission into the hall of the castle on a day near at hand, when it was understood that the Danes would celebrate a customary annual feast in

honour of the sun (68), the great emblem of Odin. The intruder was to be furnished with a concealed powder of highly-soporific qualities, which he was instructed to mingle, as opportunity might offer, with the wine, mead (69), and ale introduced at the various tables. When the unsuspecting wassailers should be surprised by the opiate, he was directed, through the information of a spy corrupted for the purpose (namely, the perfidious Ælfmor, who had dissembled his resentment from his chief, watching for some opportunity of achieving the latter's ruin), where to obtain the keys of the castle, and thus secure the admission of a chosen band of the conspirators, who should speedily execute the task of vengeance on their barbarian enemies. When the downfall of the redoubtable Askew should be accomplished, they entertained no fear of attacking, with the advantages of selection and surprise, the troops of the weak and unpopular Ceolwulf. For the future support of their cause against the aroused vengeance of the Danes, they looked to the co-operation of the wise and heroic Alfred.

Let us not omit to do honour to the high feeling of Eadulf, who, with the practised courage of a soldier, and the magnanimity of a generous foeman, recoiled from this midnight league of assassination; and urged, with energetic firmness, a recourse to open and undisguised warfare. His opposition to the measure was at length subdued,—not by the prevailing voice of

numbers, but by the consideration that his beloved Elstritha (now the sole tie of his solitary existence) was in the power of the ferocious enemy; and might, therefore, at the first indication of hostility, fall a sacrifice to the cruelty of heathen revenge.

> "Oh, think what anxious moments pass between
> The birth of plots and their last fatal periods!
> Oh, 'tis a dreadful interval of time,
> Made up of horror all, and big with death!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE "NORTHERN CHRONICLES."—EXTRACTS CONTINUED: THE SURPRISE AND MASSACRE OF THE DANISH GARRISON. — DEATH OF KING ASKEW. — ATTACK ON THE FORCES OF CEOLWULF UNSUCCESSFUL.—DEATH OF EARL EADULF.—BARBAROUS CIRCUMSTANCES ATTENDING THE EXECUTION OF THE CONSPIRATORS.—INTERMENT OF KING ASKEW. — ELEGY ON ASKEW OF HLEIDRA.— CONFLICTS BETWEEN KING ALFRED AND THE DANES.

WOR. And now I will unclasp a secret book,
And to your quick-conceiving discontents
I'll read you matter deep and dangerous;
As full of peril and advent'rous spirit,
As to o'er-walk a current, roaring loud,
On the unsteadfast footing of a spear.
King Henry IV., Part I. act i. sc. 3.

At length the momentous day arrived, wherein this bloody stratagem was to be acted! The Glee-man, as expected, gained access to the apartments of Cariberta, to whom the sweet melodies of Gaul brought back the tender recollections of childhood. She recommended him to the protection of Askew, who was glad to enrich the great festival in honour of the "All-Father" with strains of rare and skilful harmony (70), and who, having caused him to be clad in costly habiliments, conferred a chain of richly-wrought

silver on the welcome visitant, whom he also retained in his service. The feast was duly solemnized—

"They then to the feast
went to sit,
eager to drink wine;
all his fierce chiefs,
bold, mail-clad warriors!
There were often carried
the deep bowls
behind the benches;
so likewise vessels
and orcas full
to those sitting at supper.
They received him, soon about to die,
the illustrious shield-warriors:
though of this the powerful one
thought not; the fearful
lord of earls."

At the destined hour of midnight, when all seemed locked in deep security, the treacherous potion was administered, the fumes of which soon overpowered the gigantic prince and his fierce associates—

"The spirit of the wan night came on;
The hosts of the shadows roll up.
The warriors sleep—even those
That should have held the horn of the palace."

The fatal ministers of revenge were then let in to complete the work of betrayal; and the "Powerful One," the "Fearful Lord of Earls," the "Giver of the Bracelets of the Nobles," the "Eagle of Battle," the far-famed leader in a hundred fields, whose very name had put to flight the most daring hosts, thus fell an

inglorious prey, in an hour of unguarded and unsuspecting revel.

> "They assailed the sleeping warrior on his upper side :
> *an axe* struck the unwary one
> on the bone of his locks;
> the blood burst from the broken veins;
> *and thus fell the Dragon Chief,*
> *the dear lord of his people,*
> *the mighty Askew.*"

On the same night, the citadel was attacked; but, intelligence of the plot having been disclosed by the same traitor who had been bribed by the opposite party to give up the secret deposit of the castle-keys, the troops were on the alert, and made good its defence. The heroic Eadulf perished in the second assault, while boldly leading on his men to the breach—

> "First in the crimsoned rank of bleeding pikes!"

The Mercian monarch, becoming in turn the assailant, pursued and signally routed the forces of the baffled conspirators, capturing the various leaders and chief agents of the plot. These were immediately executed, with consummate cruelty ("the sword of justice being turned into the butcher's axe"), to strike terror into the hearts of future agitators of rebellion, as well as to convince the Danish power of the zeal and devotion of its deputed representative. The inhuman fate of Ella of Northumbria, who fell a victim to the savage vengeance of the sons of Ragnar Lod-

brok, was revived in the sufferings of the Glee-man, Berdic. They divided his back, spread his ribs into the figure of an eagle, and agonized his lacerated flesh by the addition of the saline stimulant (71).

The remains of King Askew were royally interred in a spacious vault excavated on an eminence near the river, beyond the burial-ground of the abbey-church, whose blackened ruins formed a striking monument of his own fate! The body of the monarch was deposited in a stone coffin (72), around which were laid the corpses of a hundred of his most faithful and distinguished followers, with their feet pointing towards the main object of sepulture. Thus perished the princely and warlike Askew, beneath the axe of a nameless assassin! The fate of the beautiful Cariberta remained unknown; but it was supposed that, together with her infant son and female attendants, she escaped from the dismal scene of murder, and sought refuge in her native clime.

The following dirge (73) was chanted by the Danish minstrels that attended the solemnization of the funeral-rites, and who were chosen for that purpose from the people of the late chief, then serving with the general forces under Gothrun, Oskitul, and Amwynd, at Cwatbricge, whence were still prosecuted their attacks on Wessex.

ELEGY ON ASKEW OF HLEIDRA.

Sons of the stormy North ! awaken
Your loftiest dirge for the kingly slain :
For the mighty Askew, famed of peoples,
Chief of the "Dragon Shield !"

The lightnings spared his frowning war-sheet,
As he dash'd in pride o'er the foaming main :
For well they knew that the dark sea loved him !
Her fierce, her storm-nursed child !

Sailed round his conquering flag the eagle,
And screamed for joy of her promised food :
And the greedy war-hawk followed after,
With the wolf of the desert-wold !

He burst the gates of a hundred castles,
His foot trode on their chieftains' necks (74) :
As they bowed in trembling fear before him,
The lord of ocean might !

But behind the clouds of the Saxon foe-drift
Hath Hleidra's star in darkness set :
The shades of death have its wild rays scattered,
Its blood-red light is past !

He is gone from the throne in the lofty mead-hall,
Mute are the song and the harp-string now :
His banner is folded, his war-blade broken (75),
The pride of his strength is o'er !

Deep in the night-black vault we laid him,
In the dark, cold clasp of the dismal earth,
With a hundred warrior-mates around him,
His loved ones of the fight !

Mid the circling cups of the joyous war-feast,
In the distant halls of his native North :
We will speak of the deeds of the valiant Askew,
In the strength of his giant-might !

We will tell how the hero's soul is blessed
In the golden light of Valhall's (76) joy :
Where the fair Valkyriar (77) deftly carry
The twisted mead-cup round !

Sons of the North ! the dirge is ended,
But our hearts shall dwell with the mighty dead :
With the princely Askew, lord of nations,
Chief of the "Dragon Shield !"

The Danes continued to be reinforced by such countless allies from the North, that they resolved to make one general attack on the power of Alfred, and drive him, like the unfortunate Burrhed, his brother-in-law, from his dominions. In pursuance of this determination, an extensive fleet was despatched, under the command of Hubba, one of Halfdene's brothers, to make a descent in the West; whilst Gothrun, with an army resembling a vast deluge, swept, with resistless violence, over the eastern portion of Alfred's possessions. So great was the terror inspired by this general invasion, that the English abandoned their unhappy sovereign, and, forgetful of their duty, fled to the continent, or sought concealment in remote parts of the island; while such as remained submitted themselves, without a struggle, to the enemy. Alfred, finding his subjects so cast down by despondency, had

no alternative but to yield to this painful reverse, and seek safety, for the present, in a private station. Though alone, however, and without aid, he nobly resolved to recover the dominions he had lost, or perish in the attempt.

"To *live* with FREEDOM, or to *die* with FAME."

After some time, an incident of an encouraging nature induced Alfred to put his determination in force. Hubba, Halfdene's brother, was routed and slain, with twelve hundred of his men, by Odun, Earl of Devon, and the famous magical standard, named the "Reafan," fell into the hands of the conqueror. Animated by this gleam of success, which also gave new courage to the English, the heroic monarch gave notice of his place of concealment to his nobles, invited them to concert measures for an early attack of the forces under Gothrun, and speedily collected a small body of troops, with which, under cover of a surprise, he soon afterwards assaulted the numerous foe, and gained an entire victory. The result of this daring enterprise spread still loftier exultation through the breasts of his followers; his camp daily received a stronger accession of numbers; and, in a little time, he found himself restored to the greater part of the territories which had been wrested from him. A quaint old passage in the writings of Richard of Rochester breathes with singular freshness the delight of the re-inspirited Saxons, and we will close

the present chapter by quoting it. Speaking of the Danes, he says,—

"Ure Houses they brened, the Cattel were slain
In the Contre, then cam they to Rochestre,
And fighten against her Castil Wals, but in vain,
For the gode Kynge Alfrede he sone dyd apere;

"Then the barbrous Danes were in fright ful sore,
'Fly, Alfrede yat Devil is coming!' they sayd;
And renne to ther Shippes ful quickly therfor,
And leven ther Booty and eke al ther Dede.
Then weren moche Meriment in Rochestre made,
That we bin so sone deliveryd from Evil
Of these furis Danes; ure Herts weren glad,
That they feren our gode Kynge more than God or the
Devil."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE "NORTHERN CHRONICLES."—EXTRACTS CONTINUED: THE DAILY SUCCESS OF KING ALFRED AGAINST THE DANES. — CEOLWULF'S ENDEAVOUR TO INTRIGUE WITH THAT PRINCE IS DETECTED, AND HIS DEPOSITION AND OUTLAWRY DETERMINED UPON. — HIS VAIN ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE THE RESENTMENT OF THE DANISH COUNCIL.

The *Council* (much I 'm bound to thank 'em for 't)
Have placed a *pageant sceptre* in my hand,
Barren of power, and subject to control;
Scorned by my foes.

ROWE.

THE brilliant achievements of the heroic Alfred, in the west and the south of the invaded isle, spread daily fresh disasters through the camps of the encroaching enemy. His victorious approach towards the boundary of Mercia rendered the Danish Council suspicious of the fidelity of the abject Ceolwulf, of whose treachery to his former master and benefactor they retained a just abhorrence, even while they availed themselves of his perfidious acts, to throw an air of authority over their rapacious designs upon Mercia. The period when they could dispense with his services had arrived (78), and they were prepared to deprive him of his degraded dignity, when

an event arose that confirmed their mistrust of his fidelity towards themselves, and determined them to visit with the deepest ignominy the wretched object of their resentment. To seize upon his accumulated spoils, and, by a decree of banishment and outlawry, expose him as a victim to the infuriated passions of those whose possessions he had invaded, and whose persons he had subjected to torture, seemed, to these martial legislators, an act of equal and deserved retribution. By way of set-off to his treachery against themselves, they resolved to add, to the severity of this proceeding, the various circumstances of punishment which will be detailed in an ensuing page (79).

It was a dark and stormy day, in the month of December, when Ceolwulf arose from his couch, and eagerly inquired whether any of the royal ærendwracas or messengers, had arrived with letters during the night. Weary of his task of perpetual subjection to the caprices of his imperious masters, and anxious to establish his claims to royalty on a firmer tenure than that derived from an invading and foreign power, he had communicated to King Alfred his desire to place the government of Mercia at that prince's disposal, on condition that he himself retained the office of deputy, as enjoyed by the late monarch, Burrhed. This ill-fated missive had fallen into the hands of the Danish Council, and proved the signal for his intended deposition.

Finding himself again disappointed in the receipt

of intelligence from Alfred, he revolved in his mind the various circumstances suggesting a belief that the despatch which he had forwarded to that sovereign had been intercepted and made known to the Danish potentates. Every moment added to the terror of his apprehensions, as he continued to gaze from the main tower of the citadel in the direction of the Roman way, or stán-stræte (80), as it was called by the Saxons, and still observed no appearance of the wished-for horseman. At length his straining eye was accosted by an object which carried death to his hopes of safety and success. At the distance of a league he beheld an armed force of considerable strength, marching under open banner with unusual rapidity. That it constituted some portion of his own troops, whom an unlooked-for emergency had caused to vary their station, was the thought of an instant; but, at the next inquiring glance, it too truly appeared that the square white ensign of the hated Fierabras (the now chief-monarch of the Danish power) was approaching. The dreadful "raven" soon met his shrinking gaze, and he turned with sickening horror from that sign of impending doom! That his truculent and powerful masters had discovered his treachery, and were hastening to inflict the penalty of his baseness, was fully apparent; and a rapid flight alone could save him from the fury of their just resentment.

Speedily descending from the tower, he sought the inner ballium of the citadel, and, summoning Alfwold,

his sword-bearer, or esquire, bade him see that "Thundercloud," one of his swiftest horses, was immediately saddled, and brought with all speed to the wicket of the Eagle Tower. A slight feeling of hope returned as he watched the hurrying attendant recede in the direction of his errand, and bethought himself of the matchless celerity of his sable favourite, which should bear him in a few hours beyond the reach of his offended allies. But, at the next unpropitious moment, a loud and deafening cheer burst with the startling effect of a sudden peal of thunder from the southern battlements; and, on turning his eye thither, with an apprehension of indescribable terror, he beheld his own ensign, the "Golden Dragon" of Mercia (which the policy of the conquerors had allowed to remain as the standard of the kingdom), contemptuously torn from its cross staff or yard, and hurled from the adjoining tower into the moat beneath. The huscarls, or Danish body guard, with which the mistrust of the council had for some time surrounded him, immediately afterwards mounted in its place the white, sable-fringed flag, bearing the hideous symbol of the "Raven." Ominous, indeed, did that "bird of fate" appear to the trembling monarch, whose short-lived and troubled greatness was about to set in a storm of characteristic violence. As the banner of Mercia fell, the wild breezes of the December morning spread open its gorgeous expanse of azure illumined with gold, and sustained it, at intervals, in its descent, as if to

mock the lingering glances of that fallen son of ambition with the prolonged expiration of the last visible record of his departed greatness! Pangs, such as can only be known to the spirit of him who has sacrificed every earthly tie—every divine command, to reach a state of envied exaltation, and who has beheld himself in one adverse hour bereft of all for which he had perilled happiness here, and glory hereafter, assailed the fainting breast of the now defeated tyrant.

Deeming that, after this manifestation of his enemies' purpose being known to the court and garrison, his commands would be no longer obeyed, and fearful of delaying his retreat, he deliberated, for a few moments, on the best course which he could pursue, and finally resolved to fly on foot, making his escape by the orchard terrace and western moat. By this route he hoped to gain unperceived the neighbouring river, and taking advantage of one of the numerous ceols (81), or small barks lying there, direct his course across the channel, and thus place an impervious barrier between himself and his mounted assailants. Still did he dread that even that obscure portal might have been already closed to prevent his egress.

With breathless eagerness he reached the spot, when his fears were too truly verified. He was rudely answered by the gátward (one of Amwynd's late favourite bersærkars, called "Iron-head," clothed in shaggy bearskin, and furnished, in Bumbur's phrase, "with a beard like a buck-goat's"), of whom he de-

manded a passage, that horse-sentinels were placed without to cut off his retreat; while, with the insolence peculiar to low minds, on beholding a superior deprived of his accustomed authority, the churlish functionary added, that it were better for a tyrant like himself to return to the tower which he had lately quitted, and plunge his hated body from its dizzy height into the paved court beneath, than to await the lingering tortures designed for him by the approaching Fierabras. The shrill clangour of the Danish trumpets, and the sharp, angry clash of armour and weapons, drowned the remainder of the gatward's speech; and, with a loud screeching laugh, he pointed jeeringly to an advanced squadron of horsemen in chain-mail, that were seen galloping furiously towards the great southern entrance, from which they were not more than two good bow-shots distant.

"Whoo! ho! ho!" he screamed; "What, your heart 's in your heels, tyrant!—Aha! the hindermost dog may catch the hare!—The front-stall of King Fierabras's bridle is the signal for the branding-irons! They will drill thee as full of holes as a riddle before they hang thee.—Away to thy fate!—Away! the gallows groan for thee!—The swallow of Hell gapes for thee!—The devils are whetting their bloody teeth to tear thee!—Nay, I will give thee myself a cuff on the chaps ere the branding-iron spoils their beauty."

"Wretch!" cried the indignant Ceolwulf, "I have

yet a weapon to rid myself of the presumption of a dastardly churl like thee!"

"Iron-head," with a derisive gesture, shook the keys of his office in the face of the hapless fugitive.

"By the fiend's wing," exclaimed Ceolwulf, "thou shalt be my groom-of-the-stirrup in the shadowy world through which I may ride ere nightfall!" And, at the next moment, with a dexterous feint, he plunged his dagger into the brawny throat of the startled gatekeeper; the last tones of whose stifled laughter lent a stranger horror to the gurgling yell of sudden anguish that succeeded.

The trumpet-peal without was replied to by a similar salute from the garrison, accompanied by a deafening roll of drums. A tempest of united acclamations, and the grating rattle of the shafts of spears and axes struck together, bespoke the ferocious joy of Dane and Saxon, at the downfall of the cowardly and perfidious tyrant. An icy chill pervaded the heart of the now imprisoned wretch; a blood-red mist seemed to swim before his eyes; his knees smote together; and the recollection of his numberless crimes pressed, for the first time, with a sentiment of remorse on his agitated spirit. A crowd of sheeted victims, pointing to their gory wounds, flitted wildly across the darkened sphere of fancy;—their pale and ghastly features, illumined by the blaze of retributive lightnings. The terrible thought that he stood on the threshold of an eternal prison-house of woe and torture, smote,

with appalling distinctness, his perturbed conscience, and, for a short interval, rendered faint and feeble the terrors that awaited him in the sphere which he was about to leave. The guilty splendours in which he had revelled—the idle triumphs which he had enjoyed were forgotten: the dismal consciousness of crime and misery alone remained!

It was now too late to think of concealment; and the appalled monarch, endeavouring to summon courage from the very excess of his despair, returned with trembling and irresolute steps to the inner Ballium of the fortress, and there awaited, with bewildered brain, the doom that hung over him. His suspense was of brief continuance; and fatal was the issue in which it was destined to merge.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE "NORTHERN CHRONICLES."—EXTRACTS CONTINUED: CEOLWULF IS COMMITTED TO PRISON BY KING FIERABRAS.

Tyranny
Absolves all faith; and who invades our rights,
Howe'er his own commence, can never be
But an usurper. But for *thee*, for *thee*
There is no name. Thou hast abjur'd mankind,
Dash'd safety from thy bleak, unsocial side,
And wag'd wild war with universal nature.

BROOKE.

Gaoler, look to him;—tell not me of *mercy*.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE Great Gate was now flung wide open; and, ere the renewed cheer of the men-at-arms arose to its loftiest height of exaltation, the gigantic Fierabras sheathed in double mail, and mounted on a huge mouse-dun stallion, of southern breed, richly caparisoned, rode rapidly through the vaulted entrances of either court, and, beholding the object of his hate and vengeance, checked his meteor-speed in mid career, while his high-mettled and impatient charger was almost thrown on its haunches by the sudden and unexpected restraint. Drawing his broad two-edged

brand with a terrific violence, while his fiery and foam-flecked horse, "Windy-cap," neighed with exulting spirit, he approached, still mounted, the trembling and abased Ceolwulf, who, under the apprehension of immediate death, sank ignominiously on his knee, and supplicated the indignant monarch for mercy.

"Mercy!" vociferated the latter, with a contemptuous burst of laughter, that rang like the brattling roll of Alpine thunder, through the mazy passages, and echoing recesses of the Citadel, "can such a word find utterance from a blood-stained, torture-loving, fiend like thee?—But fear not that I would stain the weapon of a King and warrior with the blood of a traitorly slave so abhorred as thyself!" His magnificent steed seemed equally indignant with its royal rider, and snorted, and rolled its fierce-looking eyes, and champed its foam-covered bit, and pawed with its massive feet; while its richly-studded bridle, and gem-embroidered housings, gleamed dazzlingly, and, as it seemed to the dejected Ceolwulf, with apparent triumph, in the mid-day sun. The fine proportions of the noble courser added to the imposing effect of this gaudy and sumptuous display.

"His mane thin haired, his neck high crested,
Small ear, short head, and burly breasted;
Straight legged, large thighed, and hollow hooved,
All Nature's skill in him was proved."

"No, by the lightnings of Thor," continued Fiera-

bras, resting his immense sword between the palm of his high-topped gauntlet and his mailed foot, and raising himself in his saddle with a still more scornful air, "thy fate shall not so speedily yield thee to the oblivion of earthly contempt! Thou shalt learn to kneel at humbler feet than mine—and kneel in vain!"

Ceolwulf gnawed his lip, and grasped his dagger convulsively; but, at the next moment, a faint and ghastly smile passed over his cheek, contrasting strangely with the deep gloom of his brow; and he resumed his former look of patience and submission, humbling himself in such sort as best beseemed his heavy fortune. He rose slowly and faintly from his kneeling posture and remained silent, casting his looks towards the ground.

"Thy base and abject life," pursued the frowning chief, measuring him with his eye from head to foot with a contemptuous stare, "shall be at the mercy of the meanest churl, and his disdain alone shall urge him to spare it (82). (Soh, 'Windy-cap!' you born devil! soh! quiet—quiet!)—Thou, who, beneath the shielded roof hast drunk of the sweet wines of the South, and reposed thy pampered limbs on a bed of silken state, shalt know no shelter but the rock or the forest tree; shalt sigh in vain, for a draught of sour whey from the goatherd's creche, or for a crust of mouldy bread from the beggar's wallet! Thy food must henceforth be the herbs and wild berries; thy

drink, the waters of the cattle-shared dike! And thou shalt couch thy weary and naked form on the cold damp earth of midnight; thy feet, wounded with the rugged flints, and by the brushwood of the thickets, or defiled with the plashy soil, shall know no more the solace of the warm and perfumed bath! Thus shalt thou exist, from day to day, amid wild and desolate wastes, exposed to the angry fury of the tempest,—traversing almost impassable ways, and seeking solitary mountains, in constant terror of wild beasts, as well as of thy own species! Then shalt thou think of thy gorgeous chambers and trim gardens—thy music and train of revellers—thy stately chargers, rich apparel, costly feasts, and beautiful mistresses—all past away, like dreams of the night, from thy despairing senses, and nothing left to thee but nakedness, famine, disgrace, and impending death—nothing, save the rankling remembrance of thy atrocious crimes, and the conviction of thy rapid approach to an eternity which will consign thee to added torments and unspeakable misery!—Yes—thus shalt thou wander, naked, outlawed, and 'steorless,' through those very provinces which, in the pride of thy power, thou didst ravage with unheard of cruelty; and thou shalt find every hand uplifted against thee,—every tongue shall load thee with execration! The sun and the moon, and the fair bosom of nature, shall but darken thy miserable spirit with disgust! Thou shalt crave to die; yet recoil from the terror of death!

Till, at length, broken down by ceaseless suffering—out of hope, and utterly forlorn, thou shalt crawl to some rude hovel to die, and thy brains shall be mercifully knocked out by the savage boor that finds thee; or, perchance, he shall cruelly maim thee, from head to foot, with his goad or bill-hook; and his hungry dogs shall gnaw thy yet living carcase!—Think, tremble, despair, and die!"

Then, turning to Hrothgar, his banner-bearer, or marshal, who, with the rest of his attendants and men-at-arms, had just entered the Inner-bale, he bade him ride through the city, with the Gerefa, and other authorities, and proclaim, with sound of trumpet, that, at the hour of full noon, in the public square, the detestable tyrant and traitor, Ceolwulf, stripped of the crown which he had so dishonourably worn, and deprived of that wealth which he had so wrongfully torn from his oppressed subjects, would be publicly sentenced as an outlaw, and banished with ignominy from the city. "Tell them, moreover," added the incensed leader with a voice of thunder, "that, as a further mark of detestation and infamy, the degraded wretch shall be denuded of his every robe and garment, in the full gaze of the army and the people (83). By Ragnarôk, I will shear him to the bare skin!" And his elevated eyebrows and swelling nostrils bespoke the ineffable contempt and loathing with which he regarded the doubly-false traitor.

"Oh, by the love of Odin, noble Fierabras," implored the dejected culprit, in a feeble tone, "let me not be dealt with as a common plunderer!" And, as he spoke, the cold sweat gushed forth from every pore.

Here 'Windy-cap,' as if by way of expressing a like contempt with his master, shook his braided mane, stretched out his neck impatiently, as seeking to remind his rider that enough had been said, and, snorting impetuously, flung from his embossed bit a large flake of foam, which fell athwart the pallid cheek of the suppliant ex-monarch. The noble charger again and again more impetuously dug the ground with his hoof, and sparks of fire sprung from the flinty soil.

"Away, I have said it," haughtily returned Fierabras; "guards, see to your prisoner. Look thou, Higelac, that he be forthcoming at the appointed hour."

"Mercy!" and "Let me not be dealt with as a common plunderer!" repeated the Danish chief, in a soft, whining voice, intended to represent the petitioning accents of Ceolwulf; then, with his loudest and roughest intonation, he added—"By the bull's head of Radegast, if I had had the will of the Council, thou shouldst have lost hand and foot; but not before each knew the touch of hot water and hot iron!"

Here his sprightly favourite, 'Windy-cap,' neighed a frantic neigh, lashed his broad buttock fiercely with his thick, long-hanging tail, and, raising his massive fore-feet aloft, pawed the air with threatening violence.

He then shook himself, while the foam flew from his lips, and the clash of his steel accoutrements mingling with those of his mailed rider, filled the court-yard with its startling reverberations.

"Mercy!" continued the haughty warrior, still playing with the word, "I have a thousand times seen lesser offenders whipped, branded, pilloried, shorn of their noses, ears, and lips; plucked of their eyes and hair, and then stoned and hanged."

Sheathing his gigantic falchion with a martial adroitness, and gathering up his reins with an impatient air, he turned his horse's head aside, and rode hastily away; while Higelac, his sword-bearer, conducted the hapless prisoner, whom he at once disarmed of his dagger, to the principal dungeon of the fortress, a dark and miserable vault or cell, situate beneath the Stallere's Tower.

"His heart has fallen into his hose," said Higelac, with a grim laugh, as he turned the ponderous key. "He speaks like a mouse in a cheese. Ha! ha! ha! You cannot make a horn of a pig's tail! Had he a drop of the blood of a King about him, he would set hard heart against hard hap! A King? A dog in a doublet." So saying he quitted the dreary confines of the state dungeon, and rejoined his hilarious companions, who uttered vociferous cries of contemptuous menace, and imitated derisively the barking of dogs at a bull.

The despairing ex-monarch then threw himself, in

a paroxysm of grief, on the damp pavement, and tore his flowing hair—alternately cursing his own misguided acts and the vindictive malice of his enemies. The deep-toned, solemn echoes of the wintry blast, resounding through the near vaults and passages, seemed to reply, with an accusing and denouncing bitterness, to his vain maledictions and reproaches.

"Hours of innocent and festal gladness, how fleetly do ye roll past! Moments of self-wrought distress and dishonourable danger, how do ye lengthen yourselves out into seeming years—nay, into centuries of misery!" Such was the still recurring reflection of the now degraded captive, as he vainly strove to banish the torment arising from a newly-awakened sense of the deep retribution which was due to his almost countless acts of extortion, pillage, sacrilege, and murder.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE "NORTHERN CHRONICLES." — EXTRACTS CONTINUED: GREAT REJOICINGS IN HREOPANDUN AT THE FATE OF THE TYRANT CEOLWULF. — STRANGE PUNISHMENT ACCOMPANYING HIS SENTENCE OF OUTLAWRY. — HIS IGNOMINIOUS EXPULSION FROM THE CITY, AND SUBSEQUENT DEATH. — THE GOVERNMENT OF THE KINGDOM DIVIDED AMONG THE DANES. — FURTHER SUCCESSES OF KING ALFRED, WHO ANNEXES THE TERRITORY OF MERCIA TO THAT OF WESSEX.

K. Hen. Get you therefore hence,
Poor miserable wretch, unto your *death*:
The taste whereof God, of his mercy, give you
Patience to endure, and true repentance
Of all your dear offences.
King Henry V., act ii. sc. 2.

Great were the rejoicings that spread through the city when the strange and important tidings were made known. Densely-congregating crowds speedily attested the anxiety of the people to witness the degradation of their late sovereign, whose harsh and unjust acts had enrolled as many enemies as subjects. The impatiently-expected hour of noon at length arrived, and the shrill clangour of trumpets, accompanied by the measured tread of the Danish and Mercian troops, and the hoarsely-murmuring sound

of the countless multitude, bore fearful evidence to the agitated ear of Ceolwulf, that the period of his open humiliation drew near. The bolts of his temporary prison were soon afterwards withdrawn; and, derisively arrayed in a robe of unusual magnificence, he was led by an escort of battle-axes to the great gate of the Citadel—that gate which had so often opened to receive the plunder of his subjects. His eyes now sought the ground, a convulsive tremor agitated his frame, and his brow was bathed in perspiration.

At the moment of his exposure to the populace, the air was rent with groans and yells, and execrations, that drowned, in their tempestuous uproar, the silvery echoes of the Mercian clarions. The procession was now formed; and the abject victim of this extraordinary show of retribution was elevated above the troops and crowd upon a small stage or platform, supported by twelve bearers; while a superb chair of state, surmounted by a crimson canopy laced and fringed with gold, was provided, by way of mockery, for his unhappy use. He was then borne, amid a storm of savage outcries, rendered yet more appalling by screams of opprobrious laughter, through the principal streets, preceded, as a mark of additional insult, by the band of trumpets, that proclaimed, in strains of mock majesty, his degraded approach to the scene of his final exposure. At the end of every street, along the line of procession, fresh

crowds were seen struggling to gain a near view of the fallen tyrant, and to add their amount of execration to his overthrow. It was with difficulty that the guards about his person could, at times, repel the manifestations of violence that greeted the dejected culprit.

"Fill his mouth with melted gold, as he did poor old Umfreig's!" cried one.

"Unjoint his bones, as he did young Leonric's!" said another.

"Ay," observed a third, "we would find him a softer bedfellow than the Lady Adenfled, and that soon in a pool of water that should drown him!"

"Or, as a fiercer assuager of his lust," remarked a fourth, "what say ye to a good bonfire, that might give him a few groans and as many gasps the longer!"

"That would be stopping two gaps with one bush, neighbour," roared a fifth, "for a bonfire we must have, whether or not, on a day of such general rejoicing!"

The most savage threats continually resounded; proceeding, in many instances, from those whom he recognized as the late objects of his oppression; and thus inducing a deeper sense of the deserved indignity of his situation. Few were there who participated not in the joy of this unexpected triumph over a barbarous and unprincipled enemy; to whose rapacity and bloodthirstiness the annals of no preceding reign had presented a comparable share of affinity.

The public square was soon gained, and an open space formed in its centre, in order that a more general and uninterrupted view might be afforded of the proceedings. The encroachment of the ruder populace on this partially occupied area called for the vigilant exertions of the mounted soldiers; so intense was the anxiety of all to witness the consummation of that great and unprecedented punishment which awaited the dethroned viceroy. Every neighbouring edifice was crowded to the roof with gazers; whilst trees and walls, and temporary scaffolding, swarmed with the teeming excess of the population, otherwise unable to gain a near view of the approaching ceremony.

A long proclamation was first delivered in the name of the Danish Council, setting forth the various evil acts of the late perfidious deputy whom they had entrusted with the public affairs of Mercia, and pronouncing his deprivation of the office. A sentence of outlawry and banishment was then declared against him, whereby he was for ever incapacitated from holding any property, or being partaker of any civil rights whatsoever. "Nor sac nor soc, nor land nor strand, nor wood nor water, nor fresh nor marsh, nor wold nor fold, nor turf nor toft, nor lathe nor leasowe, nor plot nor plough-land, nor furrow nor foot-length, nor rough-ground nor room," would thenceforth be his portion; and he was adjudged to be then and there publicly stripped of his raiment by the common executioner, and thereafter ejected, with ignominy, from the

gates of the city. From that time forth, all persons were strictly, and under penalty of death, forbidden to supply food or shelter, or otherwise aid or serve the then pronounced outlaw. And it was lastly declared, that the realm of Mercia no longer existed as a kingdom, but was parcelled out into various military governments, under the control of the Danish Council; while, by the same authority, the Citadel, the Eastern Fort, and other public buildings, as well as the walls, gates, and moat of the city of Hreopandún, were ordered to be utterly subverted and destroyed.

The wretched Ceolwulf was then precipitately dragged, by the common executioner, from his elevated station; his robe of purple silk, woven with golden eagles, was, by the same functionary, reduced to shreds, and cast into the mire at his feet; his long, flaxen hair, spreading in glossy and perfumed curls over his shoulders, was shorn close to his head; and, while the deeply-riveted gaze of that countless multitude seemed to concentrate the gigantic force of one vast, appalling eye, he was, with contemptuous and rude haste, divested of each succeeding portion of his raiment. As the work of disattirement proceeded, a breathless and solemn hush pervaded the late tumultuous masses of the population. At length, the anxiously-expected moment arrived, when the forlorn and dejected victim stood exposed, in all the ignominy of enforced nakedness, before the derisive gaze of the mighty assemblage (84). Then, in one wild burst,

the shout of applauding thousands rent the skies; fresh acclamations succeeded each other, in loftier triumph; and the waving of caps, cloaks, and weapons accompanied each renewed token of the general joy, that the bloody and rapacious oppressor was thus signally condemned to the infamy due to his crimes. At the same time, as if Nature herself participated in the wrath of human vengeance, a fierce storm of hail swept obliquely against the denuded person of the delinquent, adding the severity of corporeal suffering to the pangs of mental distress. During the lapse of an hour, the despised outcast, with benumbed limbs and burning brow, remained in all the torture of that degrading exposure! The trumpets then sounded; the procession of troops and civil officers was re-formed, and the line of march was directed towards the Gate of Offa, which stood on the eastern boundary of the city. Again the wild uproar of yells, threats, and execrations was renewed; while stronger attempts were made to elude the vigilance of the guards, and wreak a final vengeance on the unhappy object of the public detestation.

"Brush his coat for him with a hedgehog!"

"Thrash his hide for him with a rafter, or the spars of a gate, and break every bone in his body!"

"Whip him with wire headed with spur-rowels that are red hot!"

"Strip his skin over his ears!"

"Make a sieve of the villain's carcase!"

"Seam him from the nave to the chops!"

"Trample him into mortar!"

These and other outcries resounded with stunning violence on all sides. The point of destination being reached the troops were again disposed so as to keep off the crowd, and the gate was opened. The prisoner was then released, and fled, amid the deafening tide of unimaginable tumult, into the sheltering recesses of the neighbouring forest.

What his further sufferings were is unchronicled; but his lifeless body, which was soon afterwards discovered, having the limbs bound together with a rope, and presenting one wide wound, as if he had been dragged along the streets and highways, and over stony and rocky places, fully evidenced how severe had been the retaliation which his own enormous cruelties had excited. His mangled remains were interred without burial rite amid the ruins of the "Roman Citadel," and, as is generally the case with the corpse of a tyrant, he had no other balm than his own blood, and no other mourner than the wind of the gloomy night. The government of the kingdom was then divided amongst various functionaries, and so existed till the decline of the Danish power, when the illustrious Alfred annexed the territory of Mercia to that of Wessex, from which it was never afterwards separated (85).

> "Replete wi h SOUL, the monarch stood alone,
> And built on freedom's basis England's throne;
> A legislator, parent, warrior, sage,
> He died, *The light of a benighted age.*"

NOTES TO PART VI.

(1.) The beard of this divinity is represented as red, to indicate the lightning, which he is supposed to wield.

(2.) A protection of the neck, a gorget.

(3.) Weyland, or Vauland, the "Wonderworker." He was the Dædalus of the North. "King Nidingur reigned now in Jutland, and had in his train that excellent smith, Velent, whom the *Vœringar* called Volund. He was so celebrated throughout the northern world, that all were unanimous in placing him at the head of his craft; and to denote the superior excellence of any production of the furnace, it became usual to say that the artist must have been a Volundur in skill. A rivalry having ensued between this interloper and the monarch's former smith, it was agreed that Velint should fabricate a sword, and his opponent a helm, which the latter was also to put on, and if it were found proof against the edge of his steel, Velint's head was to pay the forfeit. Accordingly, at the time appointed, Amilias having previously expressed his determination to enforce the penalty, sat down upon a stool, defying Velint to exert all his strength. The latter, who stood behind him, then raising his weapon, clove, at a single stroke, the armour and armourer down to his girdle; and inquiring what he felt, was answered by Amilias, that he had an internal sensation as if arising from cold water. 'Shake thyself!" was Velint's reply; and this advice being adopted, the moieties of his dissected frame separated, and fell on opposite sides of the stool."—*Icelandic Saga,* quoted in Strong's Notes to

the Translation of Bishop Tegner's *Frithiof's Saga*. The names "Nidingur" and "Volundur" in the preceding extract may be pointed out to the antiquarian reader as affording early instances of the practice of joining the epithet "great" to the appellations of famous persons—*ur*, thus terminally affixed, being a Gothic or Punic word, implying famous, and entering largely into the composition of Danish and Saxon names.

(4.) See Notes to Part VIII., No. 55, Vol. iii.

(5.) A guard, warden, or watchman. To the warden was sometimes committed the office of executioner, as suggested in the text.

(6.) Dwarfs.—See Notes to Part VIII., No. 55, Vol. iii.

(7.) The "Dragon" was the armorial device of Mercia.

(8.) A jar, or similar vessel.—See Notes to Part VIII., No. 36, Vol. iii.

(9.) The gold-combed cock of Asgard, belonging to the *Æsir*, or Gods. It is thus alluded to in the "Völuspá:"—

"Crow'd his *Æsir* call
Cock, with glistening crest;
He, in Odin's hall,
Wakes the brave from rest."

(10.) The celestial abode of the *Æsir*, or Gods.—See Notes to Part IV., No. 10, Vol. ii.

(11.) The *Aurora Borealis.*

(12.) The pirate army of the North was thus designated.

(13.) An ornament worn round the neck, and made in the form of a heart.

(14.) A cloak.

(15.) *Stallere*, master of the horse; Chamberlain, keeper of the King's "Hoard;" *Dish-thane*, carver of meat at the King's table; Chief-smith, armourer to the King.

(16.) A punishment frequently practised by the Danes. The ankle-bones were dislocated, and the feet of the offender turned in a direction opposite to the natural one.

(17.) An occasional mode of torture.—See Present Notes, No. 71. Also Notes to Part VIII., No. 61, Vol. iii.

(18.) A shirt of mail, *lorica annulis ferreis concatenata.*

(19.) A bracelet.

(20.) A monument of the slain.

(21.) That these persons were not only valued, but well rewarded in their day, we learn from a curious fact: Edmund, the son of Ethelred, gave a villa to his *glee-man*, or *joculator*, whose name was Hitard. This *glee-man*, in the decline of life, went on a visit of devotion to Rome, and previous to his journey gave the land to the church at Canterbury. [Dugdale, *Mon.* p. 21.] In Doomsday-book, Berdic, a *joculator* of the King, is stated to have possessed three villas in Gloucestershire.—Turner's *Hist. of the Anglo-Saxons*, vol. iii, book 7, chap. 7, p. 61.

(22.) Those who died a bloodless death were held incapable of admission into the Valhalla, or "Hall of Slaughter," where the mighty Odin receives, and entertains with banquets and warlike diversions, the heroes elected to share in the delights of this northern paradise. "If we reflect upon the picture of this heaven of heroes, it is clear that the prospect of such a celestial paradise, the expectation of reunion with dear and valorous friends, the hope of being gathered to his fathers in the society of the gods, might stimulate the Scandinavian warrior to great, to incredible feats of bravery—might sweeten to him the bitter cup of a trou-

blous life, and render death, as the guide to supreme happiness, a welcome visitant."—Hachmeister, *Nord. Myth.* s. 167.—"To be slain in his armour was the vow of every free man; while the more illustrious heroes, when attacked by disease, preferred 'to shuffle off this mortal coil' in a way more glorious than by a lingering sickness. Some chose to be carried into the field of battle, that they might close their eyes in the midst of slaughter; others procured death from their own hand, or besought the melancholy services of a friend. The rocks and mountains from which those weary of life threw themselves headlong bore the figurative appellation of 'Odin's Hall.'"—"Scandinavia," by Drs. Crichton and Wheaton.

(23.) I have somewhere read that the heathen Danes used to inter their dead with this particular rite; though I am unable to note any direct authority for the usage. Perhaps, however, the fact may be familiar to the reader who has had much occasion to refer to the Northern histories. The most ancient form of burial was with the head towards the North.

(24.) The demon fire of doomsday.

(25.) Those were said to be "black-buried," who were doomed in a future state to the inmost regions of Hela. "On the shores of the dead bodies, remote from the sun," says the 'Edda,' "there is a spacious and dismal hall, with its gates wide open to the northern winds. The walls are wattled with snakes, whose heads look inward, and vomit poison. Rivers of this poison rush through the hall, which the unhappy are forced to ford. But in the worst condition are those who are precipitated into the inmost regions. They are tormented by the evil demon, who dwells in the farthest darkness."

(26.) One of the Northern idols.—See Notes to Part V., No. 35, vol. 2.

(27.) Spanish horses may be supposed to have been occasionally acquired by the Danes in their marauding expeditions, which

extended equally to the coasts of Germany, France, Spain, Italy, England, Scotland, and Ireland.—See Notes to Part VIII., No. 16, Vol. iii.

(28.) Mimer was slain by the Vanes (Schlavonians), who, mythologically considered, are a dark and mysterious race. In the "Völuspá," or alliterative chant of the prophetess, they are thus introduced:—

"Battered were the burg-walls
Builded by the *Æsir;*
Victors o'er the valley
Valorous Vanes advanced.
Forth flew Odin fiercely,
Fate-winged darts fast hurling;
First then, folk wide-wasting
War deformed the world."

One result of the conflict was the delivery of Mimer, as a hostage, into the power of the Vanes, aerials, who, decapitating their sage security, sent his head to Odin. This head, embalmed with certain mystic herbs and runic incantations, became oracular, and the privy-counsellor of the ruler of Asgard.—STRONG'S *Frithiof's Saga*, p. 47.

(29.) The wild boar which furnished an article of food at the banquets of Valhalla, and which, after serving as the daily supply of thousands, became whole again every night.—See present Notes, No. 76.

(30.) A deity worshipped by the northern nations, and supposed, by some writers, to have been originally connected with the superstitious worship of the east.

(31.) Provence, celebrated for the excellence of its wines.

(32.) Cook. This officer had the superintendence also of the poultry-yard. "A cook," observes Mr. Turner, "appears as an

appendage to every monastery, and it was a character important enough to be inserted in the laws. In the cloisters it was a male office; elsewhere, it was chiefly assumed by the female sex." The addictedness of the monks to the prolonged pleasures of the table fell at a later period, under the severe animadversions of that rigid monastic censor, St. Bernard. "And while they spin out their immoderate feasts," says he, "is there any one who offers to regulate the debauch? No, certainly: dish dances after dish; and for the abstinence which they profess, two rows of fat fish appear swimming upon the table. Are you cloyed with these? The cook has art sufficient to prick you up others of no less charms. He'll provide sauces as different as your dishes. Thus plate is devoured after plate, and such natural transitions are made from one to the other, that they fill their bellies, but seldom blunt their appetites, for the palate is always so agreeably entertained with so many novelties, that it has not leisure to be satisfied."

(33.) Venerable Bede had rendered the Gospel of St. John into the speech of his countrymen, together with extracts from other portions of Scripture.—PALGRAVE'S *Hist. A. S.*, p. 170.

(34.) There were also Anglo-Saxon versions of the Psalter, as I have before noticed.—PALGRAVE'S *Hist. A. S.*, p. 170.

(35.) The discerning reader will have observed that there are sundry passages bordering on anachronism in the foregoing composition, and I must not omit, therefore, to state, by way of apology, that the piece was written for another narrative, of a later historical date. The song is inserted here as appropriate, in other respects, to the story, and it is hoped that, with this explanation, it will be received with indulgence. I have altered it, as far as I could, to adapt it to the present purpose. The passages chiefly alluded to, I need scarcely observe, occur in stanza five. It may here, also, be remarked that the metrical form of this and some other pieces in the same volume must be supposed to have been adopted in translation by Sir Ernest

Oldworthy, the construction of the Anglo-Saxon poetry being far more simple. Sir Francis Palgrave, in his "Hist. A. S.,' p. 168, has stated that *end-rhymes* were not used, but the remark is, in some degree, erroneous. The Anglo-Saxons occasionally used them, as is proved by various existing productions.—See MR. SHARON TURNER'S *Hist. A. S.*, vol. iii. p. 331. This last-mentioned author has successfully traced the use of rhyme to the Romans, in their vulgar ballads, thus oversetting the erroneous opinion which formerly existed, that *rime* originated from the Arabs, or from the Italian monks of the eighth century. The following is a curious specimen of the versification of our ancestors, at a much later date, occurring in the reign of Henry II.:—

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

"Ure Fadyr in Heaven rich,
Thy Name be halyed over-lich.
Thou bring us thy michel bless, als
hit in Heaven y doe.
Evar in yearth been it also.
That holy Bread that lasteth ay,
Thou send it ous this ilke Day.
Forgive ous all that we have don,
As we forgive uch other mon.
Ne let us fall into no founding,
Ac shield ous from the foul thing."

(36.) Mercia was now entirely in the power of the Danes, but, according to their cunning policy, they did not immediately assume the government of the country.—PALGRAVE.

(37.) The conquest of Mercia by Egbert is here alluded to. That monarch drew the defeated king, Wiglaf, from his retirement, at Crowland, and restored him to his crown, on condition of his paying an annual tribute. "This condescension of Egbert," says Littleton, "had a happy effect on the Mercians, who were satisfied with the terms that Egbert had imposed, and lost

all sense of their subjection, on their being indulged in the use of their ancient form of government, and ruled by their own sovereign."

(38.) Speed remarks, that the dress of the men, amongst the Saxons, consisted of cassocks, which were "large and worn loose, most of linen, trimmed and set out with very broad gards or welts purfleet, and embrodered with sundry colours, and the richer sort with pearles; their hair, bound up in a copper hoope, stood in tufts upon the crowne, the rest curled and falling down upon their shoulders." He describes the dress of the women as consisting of "linen garments trimmed and interlaced with purple, and without sleeves, their arms bare, and bosoms naked and uncovered." "Long hair," observes Sir F. Palgrave, "was a token of dignified birth. Only kings and nobles were accustomed to allow of its growth; persons of an inferior or servile class were closely shorn."

(39.) Derby. The local reader will peruse with interest the following passage from Glover's "Derbyshire," vol. ii. p. 370, wherein the road from *Northweorthig* to *Hreopandún* is conjecturally traced with much probability. "Having ventured thus to trace St. Mary's Gate from the brook to the ford or bridge over the Derwent, we may boldly assert that it was the main road through the town at the time of the Saxons, and that, crossing the Odde-brook at St. Werburgh's, it was carried on between the possessions of the monks of St. James and the Dominicans of Friar-gate, and so on over the hill at Littleover, until it arrived at the ferry opposite Repton, or *Repandun*, then the capital of Mercia and the residence of her monarchs. On the fall of the Mercian kingdom, the intercourse with Repton would necessarily cease, and a road to Leicester, where kings of a later date have held their court and summoned their parliament, would consequently be opened, and speedily become the great road to London." Another road between Derby and Repton, at the same period, is alluded to in the succeeding page of the work just quoted. "Besides, the road from this elevated part of the town

to Repton, or *Repandun*, which was long in the hands of the Danes, crosses a high land, which commands a view of that ancient capital of Mercia, and on that ridge the hamlet of Normanton still exists, and proves that these Northmen, or Norsemen, as they were called by the Saxons, had there fixed an important station."

(40.) The *hide* is supposed to have consisted of one hundred and twenty acres.

(41.) Words of frequent occurrence in the Anglo-Saxon deeds of conveyance.

(42.) I am not sure that gloves were worn in the days of the Octarchy, but we have direct evidence of their use in France at the same period, and even during the earlier reign of Charlemagne. Some writers date their introduction into England about the commencement of the eleventh century. As Thor, the deity of the old Saxon worship, is represented in the *Eddas* as wearing such an appendage, I think it may be fairly inferred that his worshippers were accustomed to use what must have been so familiar an object of notice. Gloves were worn in the time of Homer, who, if I remember right, describes them as worn by the labourer at plough. Since writing this note I have seen a chapter in the "Life of St. Guthlac," "concerning the *gloves* which the ravens carried off."

(43.) Tax, tribute.

(44.) Soul scot, a payment made to the clergy on the death of a party.

(45.) Lent.

(46.) "We have a contemporary picture," observes Mr. Turner, "of the internal state of England during the reign of Ethelred, in the sermon of Lupus, one of the Anglo-Saxon bishops." This sermon was preached about A.D. 994. As the representation will equally apply to the period referred to in the text, I shall tran-

scribe the passage in which it occurs. "We perpetually pay them [the Danes] tribute, and they ravage us daily. They ravage, burn, spoil, and plunder, and carry off our property to their ships. Such is their successful valour, that one of them will, in battle, put ten of our men to flight. Two or three will drive a troop of captive Christians through the country, from sea to sea. Very often they seize the wives and daughters of our thanes, and cruelly violate them before the great chieftain's face. The slave of yesterday becomes the master of his lord to-day, or he flies to the *Vikingr*, and seeks his owner's life in the earliest battle." The terror and distress thus excited by the Northman's incursions led to the insertion of a special clause in the Litany, praying for protection against them.

(47.) A similar mode of insolent defiance is recorded in history. "Before Egill set sail again for Iceland, he took one of the oars of his ship, upon which he stuck a horse's head, and, as he raised it aloft, exclaimed, "Here I set up the rod of defiance!' He then turned the horse's head towards the land."—WHEATON.

(48.) A mixture made of new wine. It is uncertain whether the Anglo-Saxons cultivated the vine, for the purpose of making wine. In the earlier period of the Roman occupation, wine was not only imported, in considerable quantities, from the continent, but some attempts were made to cultivate vines, and to make wine in Britain. Wine was also made in this country, from the grape, in the Anglo-Norman era. William of Malmesbury, in his history, remarks: "This vale [speaking of the vale of Gloucester, where he had chiefly spent his days] is more abundant in vineyards than any other of England. They produce great quantities of sweet grapes, the wine of which is hardly inferior to that of France."

(49.) This epithet is frequently applied to the drinking-cups used by the Danes and Saxons. I think that it may allude to a vessel of this kind furnished with handles of a twisted form, and resembling those used by theRomans. The *ansæ* or *nasi* of the cups

belonging to the latter were usually twisted (*tortiles*). See 4 VIRG. *Ecl.* 6, 17. JUV. 5, 47. OV. *Ep.* 16, 252. In all probability, vessels only of the largest size were furnished with these handles, among the Danes.

(50.) These titles were borne by Emma, daughter of Richard Duke of Normandy, who became the wife of Ethelred II., in A. D. 1002.

(51.) King Burrhed married the daughter of a West-Saxon monarch (Ethelwulph), and the nuptial ceremonies were celebrated at Chippenham.

(52.) Snake's-Eye.

(53.) The queen here uses the phrase of "your glory" as synonymous with our expression of "your majesty." Mr. Turner, in his "Hist. of the A.-S.," informs us that the epithets given by the pope to the first Christian king of the Anglo-Saxons, were, "the glorious," and "the most glorious." A pope, in 634, addresses the King of Northumbria as "your excellency." Boniface, to the King of Mercia, says, "We entreat the clemency of your highness." In several of their letters, the phrase "your glory" is used.—See TURNER's *Hist. of the Anglo-Saxons*, vol. iii. b. 8, c. 3, p. 165, 166.

(54.) It is well remarked by an accurately-observing writer, that the notions which the Danes entertained of predestination had a wonderful effect on the national manners, and on the conduct of individuals. They held all nature to be constantly under the regulation of an almighty will and power, and subject to a fixed and unalterable destiny.

(55.) An evil being dreaded by the north-men. That Faul might not hurt, was one of their exorcisms.

(56.) A malign deity who frequented the waters. It is probable that we here see the origin of *Old Nick.*

(57.) The sword of Askew, as we find elsewhere, was an enchanted weapon, which had belonged to one of the ancient giants, and possessed the power, previously imparted to it by Odin, of inspiring the owner with resistless strength and a divine fury. Like the *miolnir* of Thor, it had also the wonderful faculty of never missing its aim.

"Like the bird of rage was his sword on their bucklers ;
It was wielded with deadly fate."

(58.) In the poem of "Beowulf," which Mr. Sharon Turner considers the oldest composition in an epic form, that now exists in any of the vernacular languages of modern Europe, we read an account of an ancient sword, on the polished blade of which, in pure gold, the *rune*-letters were marked, that detailed the battles of the ancient times, when after the flood the race of the giants was destroyed.

(59.) A dwarf, who forged the hammer of Thor. This being resembles the deformed blacksmith-deities of the Greeks, Vulcan and his Cyclopes.

(60.) Now Wilton, in Wiltshire. In the time of the Saxons, it was a bishop's see, with twelve parish churches, and the great road from London to the West of England passed through it.

(61.) A. D. 853. Echard thus refers to the period of this event :—"The Saxons imagining themselves free from the common enemy [the Danes], renewed their old contests with the ever-depressed Britons, against whom Burthred, King of Mercia, successfully obtained the assistance of King Ethelwulf, whose daughter, Ethelswith, he had obtained in marriage; which for awhile supported the fame and power of that valiant but unfortunate prince." Lyttleton gives us the following notice of this war, the date of which he refers to 843, ten years earlier than the preceding account :—"A war now broke out between the tributary King of Mercia and Mervyne Vrych, King of the Britons : a battle ensued, in which the latter was slain. But his death did

not prevent the continuance of hostilities: it only served to inflame the animosities of the two nations; the Danes were called in to the assistance of the Britons, and the Mercians were assisted by Ethelwulf. The success of the two parties is at present a secret, which none of our ancient historians have discovered."

(62.) Roderick, surnamed *Mawr*, or the "Great," endured the invasion of Ethelwulf and Burrhed, who penetrated with victorious ravages to Anglesey.

(63.) Cambridge, on the Severn, Gloucestershire.

(64.) These four monarchs are alluded to as the most worthy of note. Crida was the founder of the Mercian kingdom; Wulfhere, the first of the Mercian kings, who enjoyed the rank of *Bretwalda*, or chief monarch of the Octarchy; Ethelred, by the daring success of his arms, greatly extended the limits of the kingdom, and equally promoted the prosperity of his subjects in peace; while Offa, a prince of most distinguished abilities, was the last of the Mercian kings who deserved, if he did not enjoy, the chief sovereignty. His reign, although not unstained with crime, was one of unusual splendour.

(65.) The lower kind of freemen among the Saxons were called *ceorls*, and were chiefly employed in husbandry, whence a husbandman and *ceorl* came to be synonymous terms. They farmed the lands of the nobility, or higher orders, and appear to have been removable at pleasure. The slaves were by much the most numerous class in the community, and being the property of their masters, were consequently incapable, without his permission, of holding any property themselves. They were of two kinds; household slaves, after the manner of the ancients; and rustic slaves, who were sold and transferred, like cattle, with the soil. The term *villain* is, I think, improperly applied by Mr. Sharon Turner and other eminent writers to the Saxon slaves. Its origin, *villanus*, an inhabitant of the *ville*, dependant on the great man or lord of the soil, cannot be traced, so far at least as my researches extend, to a period anterior to the Norman subjugation. The slaves,

according to Mr. Turner's apt suggestion, "were allowed to accumulate some property of their own. We infer this from the laws having subjected them to pecuniary punishments, and from their frequently purchasing their own freedom."

(66.) He plundered the poor peasantry, robbed the merchants, and oppressed the unprotected and the clergy; on the wretched monks of the destroyed abbey of Croyland he barbarously imposed a tax of a thousand pounds.—TURNER. Ceolwulf, invested with this precarious dominion, acted like a Turkish Pasha: he only endeavoured to make the most of his government.—PALGRAVE.

(67.) A wine-bowl, so designated by King Wichtlaf, and thus alluded to in a charter from that monarch to the abbey of Croyland. "I present also to the steward of the said monastery, for the daily use of the person presiding in the refectory, my golden bowl, on the whole outside of which are carved fierce vine-dressers contending with dragons, and which I am accustomed to call my *crucibolum;* because the sign of the cross is indented within by the transverse diameters of the bowl, with a similar form projecting without in the four corners."

(68.) The Danes solemnized a great festival at the winter solstice. This feast was called *Yule,* a name by which, as Mr. Adams remarks, our festival of Christmas is still known in many parts of Scotland, and in some parts of England.

(69.) Honey, diluted with water, and fermented, was a luxurious beverage among the Danes and Saxons, and, according to some writers, could be procured only by persons of considerable opulence. Mead was probably a liquor of more general consumption in the time of the ancient Britons, who appear to have used apples also in its preparation.

(70.) This celebrated festival formed, according to Mr. Turner, a combination of religion and conviviality.

(71.) The sufferings of Ella of Northumbria are thus described by Mr. Turner, in his *Hist. A. S.*, vol. I. p. 502. The late Dr. Southey has the following allusion to the same event :—

"And when his [Ragnar Logbrog's] sons avenged their father's fate, and like the wings of some huge eagle spread the severed ribs of Ella in the shield-roofed hall, they thought

'One day from Ella's skull to quaff the mead,
Their valour's guerdon.'"

For other particulars of this barbarous method of punishment, see Notes to Part VIII., No. 61, vol. iii.

(72.) The kings of the northern nations, in the times to which I allude, were interred in stone coffins. At an earlier period their remains were consumed on a funeral pyre. Bede records in his history, c. 4, that the Anglo-Saxon monarchs were buried in coffins of stone. We read of many instances of persons of humbler condition being also interred in the same manner. St. Guthlac was buried in lead.

(73.) The most important and essential rite of sepulture amongst the ancient nations of the North, as well as amongst the early Britons, was the funeral song, containing the praises of the deceased, sung by a number of scallds, or bards, to the music of their harps, when the body was deposited in the grave. To want a funeral song was esteemed the greatest misfortune and disgrace.

(74.) This was a customary token of victory in those barbarous times. Of a similar kind was the mark of subjection imposed by the British conqueror, as expressed in the following lines of a cotemporary poet :

"I will give thee counsel : who art most excellent in disposition ;
Whose dread spreads beyond the sea !
Consider, when you oppress beyond the borders,
To make every one extend his head to his knees."

(75.) The sword of a great chief, who had signalized himself by

the number of his victories, was frequently broken, and interred with his remains; probably, lest, through falling into less heroic hands, its former glory might become tarnished. During the summer of 1843, His Royal Highness the President of the Royal Society of Northern Antiquaries,* at Copenhagen, caused several barrows on the Fockr island to be opened and examined.

* I cannot omit the opportunity afforded me by this note, of recording the gratification which I had the honour to receive in January, 1843, from my proposed admission as a fellow of this learned body; while I shall not hesitate thus publicly to assign my motive for declining that honour—an honour, be it understood, rendered additionally gratifying by the circumstance that His Royal Highness the Crown Prince of Denmark's formal approbation is necessary before the admission of any foreign member. It seems to me that the system adopted by our leading societies, of constituting foreigners *honorary* members ought to be reciprocated by all foreign societies of corresponding character; and that while we thus admit into our bodies of science, *without payment of any fees*, the members of such foreign societies, we are certainly entitled, in the case of election into *their* ranks of membership, to be received *on the same terms*. Indeed, I think we should do ourselves a dishonour to submit to other conditions; and I trust that this notice of what must evidently appear an unfair arrangement, will gain the eye of some influential friend of the institution in question. As a justification of my assumed freedom in offering these remarks, I shall add a copy of the communication I had the honour to receive:—"Sir,—The committee on early British and Irish History wishing to promote zealously the attainment of its prescribed object, and having represented to the president and directors, how desirable it would be for the society to number among its members a gentleman whose character and pursuits alike entitle him to whatever testimony of esteem and respect we have it in our power to offer; the directors have accordingly—at their meeting held this day—resolved on requesting your permission to enrol your name on the list of members at the next general meeting, as a Founder and Ordinary Fellow of the Britannic Section. I have the honour to be, sir, your most obedient servant, CHAS. C. RAFN,† Secretary R. S. N. A. Copenhagen, Jan. 14th, 1843. Robert Bigsby, Esq., F. R. S., F. S. A., Knight of St. John of Jerusalem."

† Professor Rafn, of Copenhagen, the learned compiler of Icelandic Tales, and Lives of the Northern Heroes (*Nordiske Kæmpe historier*), collected from old mythic and romantic legends, and eminently distinguished for his profound researches into Scandinavian archæology. To this gentleman, and to Professor Schröder, of Upsala, joint editor with Professor Gejer, of the "*Scriptores Rerum Suecicarum Medii Ævi*," and author or editor of various historical works illustrative of the old Scandinavian chronicles, I desire to record my highest thanks for most obliging and valued acts of kindness.

Amongst other relics discovered, were four fragments of a remarkable iron sword thirty inches in length, which had evidently been submitted to the action of fire, and then broken or bent together, as if to prevent the weapon from being again used. It was generally supposed that the similar fragments of swords in the museum had become broken and injured by the effect of rust and time, but it would now appear that they were intentionally placed in that condition at the time of being deposited in the earth. There is in my own possession an ancient sword, probably of the same date, which was lately discovered at Repton, and which appears to have been purposely broken, and exposed to the action of fire, ere it was buried.

(76.) Valhall, or the "place of slaughter," where the heroes that fell in battle are supposed to drink beer or ale in company with Odin and the other deities, in the skulls of their enemies, and to be honoured with the seats of state, in proportion to the numbers which they had slain.

> "Exalted on the noblest seat,
> Where the deathless heroes meet,
> I immortal draughts shall quaff,
> And in the pangs of death will laugh."
>
> "*Quida of* RAGNAR LODBROK."

> "With ale our throats shall soon be full;
> And our best cup a human skull."—*Ibid.*

An ably-written article in "Chambers's Edinburgh Journal" affords us a lively picture of the fierce revels of this Pagan paradise. "The Danes imagined that if their valour in the field, and general good conduct in life, proved deserving of the favour of Odin, they should be admitted into his hall after their decease, to pass the day in warlike diversions, and the night in feasting and carousing; particularly in quaffing ale or mead, presented to them by beautiful virgins, in the skulls of their enemies slain in battle. The great hall appointed for the reception of the spirits of the brave, when they left earth for the seat of the gods, was called Valhalla. Twelve beautiful yet terrible nymphs, named

Valkyries ('choosers of the slain') were the guides of the good spirits to the hall of Valhalla, and supplied them with mead. The occupation of drinking this northern nectar, and of eating the fat of the wild boar Serimner, which, after serving as the daily food of thousands, became whole again every night, filled up all those intervals of time in Valhalla that were not passed in fighting. Their daily amusement was to fight with one another till all or nearly all were cut in pieces. But little harm was done in this way, for the spiritual bodies soon reunited, and enabled the warriors to appear, entire in lithe and limb, at the feasts that followed these extraordinary engagements. The guests are described as being almost perpetually in a state of inebriation. It was only when the cock announced the arrival of morning, that these terrible heroes arose from table, to issue to the field of battle through the 540 gates of Valhalla, and hacked each other to pieces anew. The conception of a paradise so gloomy and terrific as this, illustrates strongly the character of the Norsemen on earth, and the nature of their habits and enjoyments. Perpetual fighting and perpetual intoxication!—such were the highest delights they could imagine, for the filling up of the long ages of eternity; and such, doubtless, were their prime occupations in the forms of mortals. They assigned the same tendencies to their gods: Odin himself took no nourishment but wine, and the whole history of himself and his brethren exhibits but one continuous scene of battling with giants and demons."—King Edgar was very diligent in suppressing the vices introduced by the Danes, and particularly that of drunkenness; upon the account of which he ordered silver or golden pins to be fixed to the sides of their pots or cups, beyond which it was unlawful to drink themselves, or cause others to do the same.—Echard.

(77.) The Valkyriar have been described in the preceding note. I may, however, here remark that their number is stated at six instead of twelve, in the "Völuspá," where their names are thus enumerated:—

"He saw the Valkyriar
Immediately coming;

Adorned on steeds, they went to Gothiod.
Skulld held the shield:
Scogul was the other:
Giunur; Helldur;
Gondul and Geirskialld.
Now the maidens of Odin are told:
The Valkrear: instructed to ride over the ground."

(78.) Mercia had been completely ravaged; the greater part of the nobility had fled, or had fallen in battle; few but the peasantry or churls were left. These were plundered most piteously by Ceolwulf, who continued to commit every act of oppression, until his Danish masters needed him no longer. As soon as it was convenient for them to do so, they deprived him of his disgraceful authority.—PALGRAVE'S *Hist. A. S.* p. 123.

(79.) Mr. Turner, in allusion to this event, says—"But this pageant of tyranny displeased his masters; he was stripped of every thing, and he perished miserably. [Ingulf, 27.] With him ended for ever the Anglo-Saxon monarchy. The kingdom of Mercia never existed again." "They deposed him," remarks Mr. Noble, the editor of Glover's "History, Gazetteer, and Directory of the County of Derby," "and in a state of complete nakedness and destitution, they expelled him from the palace, and left him to perish, an object of execration and contempt to all who beheld him."

(80.) The Romans, for the greater conveniency of passage from garrison to garrison, station to station, colony to colony, and from one *municipium* or corporation to another, had their public highways, called the consulary, prætorian, regal and military ways, &c. by Beda, and by the moderns, *strates*, or streets. In Britain there were many, but four were of principal note—namely, *Via Vetelingiana*, since called Watling-street; *Via Icenorum* or Ikenild-street; Ermin-street; and the Foss-way; two whereof extended across the breadth of the nation, and the other through the length of it.—ECHARD, vol. i. p. 33.

(81.) Mr. Turner spells this word, in page 244 of the first volume of his "History of the Anglo-Saxons," *cyules*, and in page 253, *chiules*. Echard, also, spells it according to the latter form. But Dr. Bosworth (the first authority we can cite, perhaps, on such a question) writes it *ceol*, or *ciol*.—See BOSWORTH's *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, sub voce CEOL.

(82.) An outlaw was said to bear a wolf's head, a figurative expression, implying that it was as lawful to kill him, as it was to destroy the noxious wild beast to which he was thus likened.

(83.) The total deprivation of garments appears to have formed an occasional part of the punishment annexed to a sentence of outlawry. Even females were subjected to this revolting mark of degradation, in the case of adultery. The husband of an adulteress, in the presence of her relations, cut off her hair and stripped her naked; he then turned her out of his house, and she was scourged with rods from one end of the town or village to the other. A female who had been thus ignominiously treated never regained her character, and neither youth, beauty, nor wealth, could ever procure her another husband. She lingered out the remainder of a wretched life in infamy and contempt.

(84.) "Usque ad ipsa verenda nudatus," are the words of Ingulph.

(85.) He did not, however, avowedly incorporate it with Wessex. He discontinued its regal honours, and constituted Ethelred its military commander, to whom he afterwards married his daughter, Ethelfleda, when her age permitted.—TURNER.

I may take advantage of this concluding note, to add a brief notice of the ultimate fate of the Danish leaders, Healfdene, Amwynd, Oskitul, and Gothrun. The annals of Ulster, Mr. Turner remarks, place the death of Halfdene in 876, and record that he perished in Ireland: "Battle at Lochraun, between the Fin-gâls and Dubh-gâls, where the latter lost Halfden, their captain."—p. 65. But, it is very evident Mr. Turner has erred,

in supposing that the Halfden here mentioned was the same leader who was quartered with the Danish troops at Repton, in 874, and who, in the following year, advanced, with a part of the army, against the Northumbrians. The "Saxon Chronicle," under the date of A.D. 911, gives us the following relation of the particulars connected with this monarch's death, in that year. "This year, the army in Northumberland broke the truce, and despised every right that Edward and his son demanded of them, and plundered the land of the Mercians. The king had gathered together about a hundred ships, and was then in Kent, while the ships were sailing along sea, by the south-east, to meet him. The army, therefore, supposed that the greatest part of his force was in the ships, and that they might go, without being attacked, wherever they would. When the king learned, on inquiry, that they were gone out on plunder, he sent his army, both from Wessex and Mercia, and they came up with the rear of the enemy, as he was on his way homeward ['In campo, qui linguâ Anglorum Wodnesfeld dicitur.'—FLOR. from ETHELW.], and there fought with him, and put him to flight, and slew many thousands of his men. There fell King Eowils and *King Healfden;* earls Ohter and Scurf; governors *Agmund*, Othulf, and Benesing; Anlaf the Swarthy, and Governor Thunferth; Osferth, the collector, and Governor Guthferth." It is not improbable that the Agmund mentioned in the foregoing extract, under the description of "governor," was the Amwynd, or Amund, who accompanied Healfdene, as one of the principal leaders of the Danish forces, on the previous expedition against the Mercians, in 874. It will be remembered that the office of king was often but a temporary one at that early period, the individual being raised to such rank for the purpose of commanding, with greater efficiency, some warlike expedition, and sinking into his former station as soon as the exigency was at an end. Another passage in the "Saxon Chronicle" instances the death of a "governor Oskytel," who, most probably, was the same warrior previously alluded to as "King Oskytel," in the same chronicle, where it details the usurpation of Mercia, and the occupation of Repton by the Danish host, in 874. The term "governor" implies an officer

invested with a high military command, and Speed, one of our best historians, in alluding to the style of "king," as accorded to these northern adventurers, adds the necessary qualification of —"as some of our writers term them." The passage relating the death of Oskytel is as follows:—"A.D. 905. This year, Ethelwald enticed the army in East Anglia to rebellion, so that they overran all the land of Mercia, until they came to Cricklade [*Creccanfordam*, FLOR.], where they forded the Thames, and having seized, either in Bradon or thereabout, all that they could lay their hands upon, they went homeward again. King Edward went after, as soon as he could gather his army, and overran all their land between the foss and the Ouse, quite to the fens northward. [Terras, — quæ inter terræ limitem sancti regis Eadmundi et flumen Usam sunt sitæ.—FLOR.] Then being desirous of returning thence, he issued an order through the whole army that they should all go out at once. But the Kentish men remained behind, contrary to his order, though he had sent seven messengers to them. Whereupon the army surrounded them, and there they fought. There fell Aldermen Siwulf and Sigelm Eadwold, the king's thane, Abbot Kenwulf, Sigebright, the son of Siwulf, Eadwald, the son of Acca, and many also with them, though I have named the most considerable. On the Danish side were slain Eohric, their king, and Prince Ethelwald, who had enticed them to the war, Byrtsige, the son of Prince Brihtnoth, Governor Ysop, *Governor Oskytel,* and very many also with them that we now cannot name. And there was, on either hand, much slaughter made, but of the Danes there were more slain though they remained masters of the field."

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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